THE STORY OF KING ARTHUR

EDWARD BROOKS

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The Story of King Arthur

BY DR EDWARD BROOKS A.M

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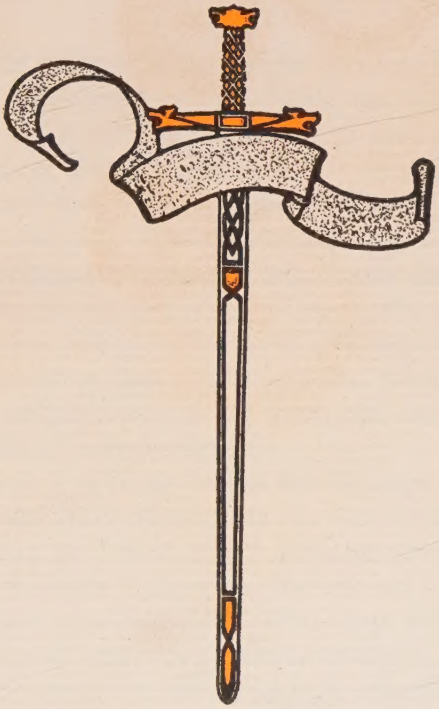
"The Story of the Iliad", "The Story of the Odyssey" etc



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PREFACE

THE Story of King Arthur is a tale of absorbing interest to both young and old. It tells of knightly encounters and valorous deeds and acts of courtesy, that touch the imagination of youth and inspire their hearts with heroic impulses. Youth is a time for hero worship, and nowhere in literature can be found nobler examples of lofty heroism than in this story. The events, moving in a shadowy past, give the work a charm of romance and mysticism that appeals to the youthful mind which delights in peopling wood and dale with the creations of its imagination.

The story of King Arthur had its origin in Wales about the fifth century and is one of the oldest legends of the British Isles. How much of it is true and how much is false no one can tell; but it no doubt had a basis in fact. That there was a Celtic king named Arthur is generally admitted,—a brave and wise ruler who added glory to the Celtic race. This King Arthur became the ideal sovereign of the Britons, and they enriched this ideal hero with every noble trait which could be borrowed from the lives of their bravest chiefs. Around this central figure

in time revolved other ideal types, and thus the noble order of knighthood was gradually evolved. Into this story were gathered the dreams and impulses and deeds of the people so that it reflects their ideals and aspirations. The tales passed from one generation to another and were repeated or sung by poet and bard, until they possessed the Celtic mind and became their national epic as the Iliad was the national epic of Greece.

From Britain the tales were carried into France where they were molded anew by the fancies and genius of that romantic people. For many years the deeds of Charlemagne had been the theme of the French romances; but about the twelfth century for these was substituted the far more poetic type of Arthur and his knights. The characters and events were finally wrought into a structure of poetic thought and expression, which presents a picture of the manners and sentiments of the people among whom it had its origin and development. The story has been called a Celtic myth, but it is really in thought and form an epic poem.

These tales were first reduced to written form in 1130-47 by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his history of the Britons. His work was very popular and was translated into old French, which facilitated its introduction into France. In the fifteenth century the tales and traditions of Arthur were put in permanent form by Thomas Malory, a poet, and

William Caxton, the first English printer. Caxton in his preface states the reason for his printing the work, but gives all the credit to Malory as having provided him with the copy which he printed. The work of Malory, as printed by Caxton, is called *Le Morte Darthur,* meaning the death of Arthur. This edition of the Celtic legends has been accepted and approved by succeeding generations. It is Malory's book rather than the older forms of the story of King Arthur which the world still delights to read and for the illustrations of which scholars edit those earlier books. "Only a true poem, the offspring of genius," it is said, "could have so held, and be still holding its ground, age after age."

As to who Malory was but little is known. It is said that he was a Welshman, supposedly a Welsh priest. Yet even this is doubtful, as he seems never to have quoted from any but the French and English versions of the story. He shows but little knowledge of Welsh traditions, nor any local knowledge of Welsh places. It is supposed by some that he was of an old English family. Instead of being a priest, however, he tells us that he was a knight; and it is seen that he was a knight in temper and spirit, and a lover of the gentle and nobler virtues of knighthood. He was surely a man of genius and a devout Christian; and though he left in the stories much plainness of speech and some unconventional incidents, yet he omitted

much that was coarse and gross in both the French and Welsh versions of the story.

The work is regarded as one of the great classics of literature. "Malory," says a writer, "was not solely an editor. He was in a large sense a creator. The material with which he had to deal was crude and coarse, but he selected that which is noblest and best, and in all his plainness of speech he never seems to try to make vice attractive. He imparts new life and character to many of these Celtic heroes, and makes them stand before us as living and breathing men and women. While he did not write in verse, he shows an epic sense, and he has really given us a prose poem of remarkable beauty and interest." "The Arthurian legends," says another writer, "were converted into a magnificent prose poem by Sir Thomas Malory in 1461. Malory's *Morte Darthur* is as truly the epic of the English mind as the Iliad is the epic of the Greek mind."

The influence of the book on English literature and thus on English life has been deep and abiding. Subsequent writers have found it the source of literary material and poetic inspiration. Spenser's *Faerie Queene* owes much of its ideals of knightly behaviour to King Arthur. Milton thought for many years to make the death of Arthur rather than *Paradise Lost* the theme of a great epic poem. Tennyson, in his *Idylls of the King*, has wrought the

material of Malory into exquisite forms of idyllic beauty.

Malory's book written more than five centuries ago is naturally not without faults in matter and style. It contains passages that are not suitable for the general reading of the young; and there is a multiplicity of details that is uninteresting and even bewildering. The object of this edition of the work is to present a version of the story that will not only be suitable but especially attractive to the young. Thus, only the leading events have been taken and those have been divested of unimportant and uninteresting details often found in the original. All the leading characters are presented, and are so fully set forth that they may be clearly seen moving like real persons in that mystic age where natural and supernatural powers combine to shape events and destinies. The language of Malory has often been retained, thus giving the story the charm of the old-fashioned simplicity and poetic beauty of expression as in the original. An exception to the above statement is that Tristram and Isolde are reserved for another story.

Thus presented, the work not only affords a story of surpassing interest for youth, but one that carries with it an influence for noble ideals and actions. While it deals with the conflict of arms where the spear and the sword are in constant evidence, yet it does so usually for high and noble purposes,—

to deal justice and to right the wrongs of the weak and unfortunate. Nearly all the characters are moved by noble impulses, and are types of courage, courtesy, and generous actions. The noble order of the Table Round was a shrine of virtue in that early age of darkness and injustice. King Arthur, Sir Galahad, Sir Percivale, and others are model knights of worthiness who are ever striving to act "worshipfully" and to be true to their knightly vows; and Sir Launcelot, "the flower of chivalry," was a model of courtesy, gentleness, and courage. —possessing all those traits that call forth the admiration of the young for noble and heroic deeds. No boy can read the story of King Arthur as here presented without having aroused within him a noble purpose of true and knightly living. That it may bring many happy hours to those who may chance to read it, kindle in their hearts a love of truth and virtue, and awaken high ideals of a life of courtesy and courage and knightly deeds, is the sincere wish of the author.

EDWARD BROOKS.

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CONTENTS

OF KING ARTHUR

CHAP.		PAGE
I	How Arthur was made King	13
II	How Arthur Overcame his Enemies	22
III	King Arthur meets his Mother	31
IV	Arthur Extends his Kingdom	35
V	The Combat between Arthur and Pellenore	39
VI	How Arthur got his Sword Excalibur	46

THE BOOK OF THE ROUND TABLE

I	Queen Guinevere and the Round Table	50
II	The Quest of Gawaine	59
III	The Quest of Sir Tor	66
IV	The Quest of King Pellenore	72

THE BOOK OF BALIN

I	How Balin Drew the Damsel's Sword	79
II	How Balin Fought with Sir Lanceor	87
III	How Balin Slew the Invisible Knight, Garlon	97
IV	How Balin Fought with his Brother Balan	105
V	The Fate of Merlin	112

THE BOOK OF MORGAN LE FAY

I	The Enchantment of Morgan le Fay	119
II	How King Arthur Fought with Sir Accolon	125
III	Morgan le Fay and the Enchanted Mantle	133
IV	The Meeting with Sir Marhaus	138
V	The Adventures of Gawaine and his Damsel	144
VI	Sir Marhaus and Ewaine and their Damsels	152

THE BOOK OF SIR GARETH

CHAP.		PAGE
I	How Beaumains became a Knight	161
II	Beaumains's Adventure for the Damsel	169
III	How Beaumains Conquered the Red Knight	185
IV	Beaumains and the Lady Dame Lyones	194
V	How Sir Gareth Became Known	200

THE BOOK OF SIR LAUNCELOT DU LAKE

I	Sir Launcelot and his First Adventure	212
II	Sir Launcelot and the Damsel of the White Palfrey	225
III	Other Deeds of Sir Launcelot	232
IV	Sir Launcelot Punishes the Treason of Maleagans	243
V	How Sir Launcelot Saved Queen Guinevere	256
VI	Sir Launcelot and Elaine of Astolat	267
VII	Sir Launcelot weds King Pelles's Daughter by Enchantment	280

THE BOOK OF THE HOLY GRAIL

I	The Quest of the Sangreal	296
II	Sir Galahad and the Floating Sword	299
III	The Quest of Sir Galahad and Sir Gawaine	309
IV	The Quest of Sir Launcelot and Sir Percivale	314
V	The Quest of Sir Bors	325
VI	The Quest of Sir Launcelot	334
VII	The Quest of Sir Galahad	341

THE END OF THE ROUND TABLE

I	The Plot Against Sir Launcelot and the Queen	347
II	King Arthur again Attacks Sir Launcelot	359
III	The Death of King Arthur	364
IV	The Deaths of Queen Guinevere and Sir Launcelot	376

ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

Ye Ancient City of Camelot . . . . . Frontispiece

Merlin Taketh the Child Arthur into his Keeping . . . 14

The Coming of Guinevere 52

The Ladies View the Dolorous Stroke 107

Merlin and Viviane 115

Morgan Le Fay Essayeth Magic 135

How Four Queens Found Launcelot Sleeping 217

How Queen Guinevere Rode on Maying 244

Sir Launcelot and Elaine le Blanc 268

Elaine Finds the Mad Sir Launcelot 289

Sir Galahad Taketh the White Shield 311

Queen Guinevere Passeth to her Death 350

The Lady of the Lake Receiveth the Sword Excalibur . 372

"Of Arthur, who, to upper light restored
With that terrific sword,
Which yet he brandishes for future war,
Shall lift his country's fame above the polar star."

—*Wordsworth.*

"Leodogran, the King of Cameliard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other child;
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Guinevere, and in her his one delight."

—*Tennyson.*

THE STORY OF

King Arthur and His Knights

OF KING ARTHUR

CHAPTER I

HOW ARTHUR WAS MADE KING

MANY years ago there reigned in Britain, now called England, a noble sovereign whose name was King Arthur. He was the flower of chivalry and the head of the noble order of the Knights of the Round Table. These knights were the gentlest and the bravest warriors that ever lived; and they did the most marvelous deeds that ever knights did in all the world. Of King Arthur's happy reign and the many valiant deeds of himself and his knights, it is the purpose of this story to relate.

King Arthur was the son of Uther Pendragon, King of Britain, and the fair Igerne of Cornwall. To win the fair Igerne for his queen the king had been aided by the magic craft of a famous enchanter named Merlin. For this aid the king had

promised that he would give him their son to be brought up as Merlin saw fit. So, when in the course of time a son was born to them, the king, in accordance with his promise, gave the boy to Merlin, who had him baptized by the name of ARTHUR. Merlin then placed him in keeping of a worthy knight named Sir Ector, with whom he grew up, not knowing that he was the son of the king.

Now it chanced while Arthur was still a youth that King Uther, his father, was taken very sick, and it was soon seen that his death was near. Then all the knights and nobles of the land were filled with grief and awe, for the birth of Arthur had been kept a secret from them, and it was supposed that the king would leave no heir to the throne to succeed him. Then Merlin summoned all the great barons of the realm and the Archbishop of Canterbury into the chamber of the dying king, and in their presence asked him if it were his will that his son Arthur should be heir to the throne. Thereupon King Uther answered, "I give him God's blessing and my own, and bid him pray for my soul, and also that worshipfully and righteously he shall lay claim to the crown on forfeiture of my blessing." As soon as he had thus spoken Uther Pendragon died.

Now none of the barons understood, or cared to understand, the meaning of the king's dying

MERLIN. TAKETH. THE
CHILD. ARTHVR. INTO
HIS. KEEPING.

words. They knew nothing of any son of Uther's named Arthur; and Queen Igerne having been kept in ignorance of the fate of her son, knew not whether he was dead or alive. So a great contention arose in the realm; and everywhere there were strife and bloodshed; for all the vassal kings asserted their independence, and every baron who could muster a few thousand followers was ready to put forward his claim to the crown.

Now when Merlin saw the country going to ruin he counselled the Archbishop of Canterbury to summon a meeting of all the great barons and nobles at London, on Christmas eve, in the hope that at that solemn festival some miracle might be wrought that would make manifest to all, to whom the throne rightly belonged. So the assembly was held, and all the barons and the nobles and many knights who had not left the realm were present. Among them was Sir Ector who had brought up Arthur in ignorance of his birth. He had been kind to the boy and had been careful to train him in all the knightly exercises and accomplishments that were held to be fitting for a man of rank. Along with Sir Ector came his son Sir Kay, a valiant knight, and with him young Arthur, his foster brother, acting in the capacity of his squire.

A solemn religious service was held in the greatest church in London. When the first mass had been said, there was seen in the churchyard,

against the high altar, a great stone four feet square, like to a block of marble, and on the top of the stone was an anvil of solid steel, a foot in height; and in this anvil stuck a fair sword with a jeweled hilt upon which were engraven these words, "WHOSO PULLETH OUT THIS SWORD FROM THIS STONE AND ANVIL IS RIGHTWISE BORN KING OF ENGLAND."

When the archbishop saw it he said, "I counsel you that you all keep within the church and pray God that no man touch the sword until the high mass be all done." When the masses had all been said, all the lords and nobles went out to see the stone and the sword. Then, one after another, many of them essayed to draw forth the sword, but none of them could stir it. When all the nobles and knights had tried it, the mystic sword still remained firmly fixed in the anvil. Then the archbishop, looking upon the assembly, said, "He is not here who shall achieve the sword; but no doubt God will make him to be known. Let us, therefore, appoint ten knights to keep guard about it, and make proclamation that every man who will may essay it."

All this was done as the archbishop suggested. Kings and nobles and valiant knights came from all parts of the realm; but though most of them essayed to draw the sword from the anvil, not one of them could do so.

Now Merlin and the archbishop were desirous of keeping the lords together; so on New Year's day a tournament was held. Among the knights that rode to take part therein was Sir Kay and young Arthur his squire. As they rode toward the place of the tournament, Sir Kay found that he had left his sword behind him at his father's lodgings; so he bade young Arthur to return and bring his sword. With this request Arthur complied, as was fitting for a squire; but when he came to the house he found it closed, as the lady and her household had all gone to see the jousting. Then was Arthur wroth when he found that he could not get Sir Kay's sword.

Now on his way to the house he had passed by the churchyard where the magic sword was standing in the anvil; and remembering this he said, "I will ride to the churchyard and take the sword with me that sticketh in the anvil, for my brother Kay shall not be without a sword this day."

So he came to the churchyard, and tying his horse to the stile, he went first to the tent where the knights abode that had been set to guard the sword. But none of them were there, for they had all gone to see the jousting. Then he went into the churchyard and took the sword by the handle and easily drew it from the stone; and then mounting his horse again, he carried it to his brother Sir Kay. As soon as Sir Kay saw it he knew it was

the sword of the stone; and being exceeding proud and ambitious, he took the sword and went to his father, Sir Ector, and said, "Sir, lo, here is the sword of the stone; wherefore I must be chosen king of this land."

When Sir Ector beheld the sword, knowing to whom the throne rightly belonged, he did not believe that Sir Kay had drawn forth the sword from the anvil. So he led him to the churchyard, Arthur also following them, and bade him replace the sword, and then again remove it. Sir Kay, thinking the charm now broken, promptly obeyed; he put back the sword into its place in the anvil readily enough, but when he essayed to draw it forth again, his utmost strength did not avail to move it.

"Now my son," said Sir Ector, "I call upon you, in the name of the Most High, to tell me truly from whom you had the sword."

"Sir," answered Sir Kay, abashed, "by my brother Arthur, for he brought it to me." Then Sir Ector, turning to Arthur said, "How got you this sword?" "Sir, I will tell you," said the boy, "When I came home for my brother's sword, I found nobody at home for to deliver me his sword, and so I remembered the sword in the anvil, and I came thither eagerly and pulled it out of the stone without effort." "Did you not find any knights guarding the sword?" said Sir Ector.

"Nay," said Arthur; "the knights had all gone to the jousts." Then Sir Ector bade Arthur draw forth the sword; and that he did as easily as from a scabbard. At this Sir Ector said to Arthur, "You are to be king of this land." "How is that?" said Arthur, "and for what cause am I to be king?" And Sir Ector replied, "Because no man could have drawn forth this sword unless he was to be the rightful king of the land." Then Sir Ector and Sir Kay both fell down upon their knees before Arthur. And Arthur looking at them in surprise said, "Alas, my own dear father and brother, why do ye kneel to me?"

At this Sir Ector replied, "Nay, my lord Arthur, it is not so; I was never your father, nor are you of my blood, for you are no son of mine." Then Sir Ector told him how he had received him when a child from Merlin and had brought him up as his own son. When Arthur heard this, that Sir Ector was not his father, he was full of sorrow and made a great moan.

Then Sir Ector said unto Arthur, "Sir, will ye be my good and gracious lord when ye are king?" "I would be greatly to blame," said Arthur, "if I were not, for you are the man in all the world to whom I am most beholden, and your good lady that as well as her own hath fostered and kept me. And if it ever be God's will that I be king, as you say, you shall desire of me whatever I may do and I shall not fail you."

"Sir," said Sir Ector, "I will ask no more of you than that you will make my son, your foster brother, Sir Kay, seneschal of all your lands." "That shall be done," said Arthur, "and even more, by the faith of my body; and never man shall have that office but he while he and I shall live."

Then they went to the archbishop and told him how Arthur had drawn the sword from the anvil. And after twelve days another solemn service was held, and all the barons came together again; and there in presence of the kings and barons, Arthur drew forth the sword from the anvil, though no one else could move it. Wherefore many of them were very wroth, saying that it was a great shame unto them all that the realm should be governed by a boy with no high-born blood. So they put off the trial until Candlemass when many more great lords came hither; but none of them could draw the sword but Arthur. Again they put it off until Easter; but at Easter time no one but Arthur could draw the sword. And again there was great indignation, and they put off the trial until the feast of Pentecost.

Now when the day of Pentecost was come, all manner of men of every station, high and low, essayed to draw the sword; but none of them could prevail with it. But Arthur pulled it forth easily before all the lords and commons, as he had done before. Then the commons cried out all at once,

"We will have Arthur for our king; we will put him no more in delay; for we all see that it is God's will that he should be our king, and who that holdeth out against it, we will slay him."

Then they all kneeled down, both rich and poor, and cried to Arthur for mercy because they had been so long in acknowledging him as their king. And Arthur forgave them, and took the sword between both his hands and offered it upon the altar where the archbishop was. And then he was made a knight by the best man there. And soon after he was crowned king of the land, and was sworn unto his lords and commons to be a true king, to stand with true justice all the days of his life. Then he made Sir Kay seneschal of England, and Sir Baudwain constable, and Sir Ulfius chamberlain; and Sir Brastias was made warden to wait upon the north from Trent forwards, for it was at that time for the most part enemy to the king.

CHAPTER II

HOW ARTHUR OVERCAME HIS ENEMIES

AS soon as Arthur became king he began to right the wrongs which had been done in the land since his father's death. Many lords had been bereft of their lands, and these he caused to be restored to their rightful owners. At the north he found many who opposed his reign; but within a few years he had won the land of Scotland and all that were within its borders. A part of Wales held out against him for awhile, but he overcame them all through the prowess of himself and his valiant knights and barons.

Then he went into Wales and ordered that a feast should be held at Pentecost in the city of Caerlon whereat the vassal kings who had not yet given in their allegiance might do so. At the time agreed upon, King Lot, King Urience, King Nantes, and several others of those who had aspired to the crown, came marching toward Caerlon, each bringing a strong following of men and arms; and they camped outside of the city.

Arthur was glad when he heard of their coming, and he sent out heralds to them with costly presents. But they would not receive his gifts, saying they had no joy to receive gifts from a beardless boy of low parentage, but that they were come to bestow gifts upon him in the shape of hard blows betwixt the neck and shoulders.

At this Arthur gathered his barons and knights about him, and caused the gates of the city to be shut. The kings laid siege to the city, but though they had many more fighting men than Arthur they could not prevail against him. Soon after the war had begun, Merlin came to the camp of the kings for which many of them seemed passing glad; and they asked him how it was that an unknown youth like Arthur had been placed on the throne of Britain. Then Merlin said to them that it was because Arthur was the son of King Uther Pendragon and the fair Igerne; and he told them all about Arthur's birth and his being brought up by Sir Ector. But they would not believe the story, for being famous knights themselves and having a larger army than Arthur, they were sure of overcoming him and keeping him from the throne. However they asked Merlin to bring out Arthur that they might have some words with him and some agreement with him; so on Merlin's advice Arthur came out to meet them. Arthur replied to all their words in a kingly manner, and said

that unless they submitted willingly he would make them bow to his authority. Then he departed from them, leaving them very wroth and full of threatening: except that three hundred of the best knights among them were so pleased with Arthur that they came over to his camp to fight for him.

Then Merlin said to the rebel chiefs, "What will ye do? It were better to submit, for ye shall not prevail against him though ye were ten times so many." To this King Lot replied, "We be well advised not to mind a dream-reader like yourself." With that Merlin vanished away and came to King Arthur and bade him to attack the kings and set on them fiercely; but that he should not fight with the magic sword which he had drawn from the anvil, unless things were going very bad; but then, he said, "Do thou draw it out and do thy best."

So forthwith King Arthur set upon them and a fierce battle followed. His knights slew many of the rebel knights, while he himself did many valiant deeds. But now King Lot and King Caradas and the king of the hundred knights set upon them so fiercely that it seemed as if they would win the day. King Arthur was in the foremost press smiting before and behind until his horse was slain underneath him. Therewith King Lot smote down King Arthur; but his four knights rushed to him and set him on horseback again. Then King Arthur drew his magic sword that he had drawn

from the anvil. It was so bright that it flashed into their eyes with the brightness of thirty torches; and with it he slew so many of the foe that those who were alive fled from the field.

But the kings though defeated were not yet ready to give up the conflict and yield their submission. Then Arthur and his knights held anxious council, and they sought the wisdom and counsel of Merlin. So Merlin was sent for, and he warned them that their enemies were too many for them, and that they should send two trusty knights to go over the sea and invite King Ban of Benwick and King Bors of Gannes to come to his aid. So Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias were selected for the mission. They crossed the sea in safety, but while making their way to Benwick they were assailed by eight of King Claudias' knights. The odds of four to one against them were not at all alarming to Ulfius and Brastias, so they put their spears at rest and rushed upon their foes and overthrew them all, leaving them so badly bruised that they could not mount their horses. Then they went to Benwick and delivered their letters to the kings. The kings were pleased to render King Arthur their aid, and promised to come over at All-hallowmass with three hundred knights. So King Arthur appointed a great tournament for that festival.

The kings arrived according to their promise and were received with much pomp and show.

They witnessed the tournament with King Arthur, in which many of the knights of the king did great feats of arms. On the following day a council was held at which Merlin undertook to bring over their army to Britain with secrecy and dispatch. This he accomplished with great success, bringing ten thousand men across the channel and concealing them in the great forest of Bedegraine, which at that time covered most of the country between the rivers Trent and Humber. The enchanter then informed Arthur and his guests what he had done; and the three kings at once marched with twenty thousand men, which was the total strength of the force that King Arthur was able to muster. Having thus joined their forces with the troops of Benwick and Gannes, they waited for the advance of the enemy. They had not long to wait, for the rebel princes had got together a force of fifty thousand men with whom they marched to attack the king. The battle was exceeding severe and lasted for two days. All the leaders on both sides were again and again unhorsed and put in great peril only to be rescued by the valor of their companions. The slaughter was very great; but at last the rebel chiefs were driven from the field with only fifteen thousand men remaining. With great courage, however, they took up a new position, determined to hold it to the last.

Then Merlin said to Arthur that it was time for him to end the contest. He had won the field and gained great spoil; but if he pushed the battle further he foresaw that fortune would incline to the side of his foes. He also promised that the rebel chieftains would not molest Arthur further for three years, as they must leave to meet a great army of Saxons which had invaded their own territory during their absence. So Arthur did as he was advised by Merlin, and withdrew from the contest.

Soon after this Arthur learned that King Leodegrance of Cameliard was sorely pressed by Rience, the Saxon King of North Wales; so by the advice of Merlin he gathered together his forces and went to the relief of the king. Arriving at the city of Carohaise, in which King Leodegrance was besieged, he entered it without being observed by the besiegers, and offered his services to the king on condition that no inquiry should be made as to their name or quality. The offer was gratefully accepted and an opportunity was soon afforded them to prove their valor. King Rience suddenly attacked the city at the head of a large body of troops. King Arthur and his knights armed themselves and hastened to sally forth to meet them. At their head marched Merlin who carried a wonderful standard,—a huge dragon with barbed tail and gaping jaws, and glaring eyes from which there flashed active sparks of fire. When this little troop

of knights, numbering only forty in all, arrived at the gate they found it locked, and the porter refused to give them egress without an order from Leodegrance. There was no time to parley over the matter, so Merlin stepped forward and lifted the ponderous gate out of its place with all its locks, bolts, and bars, gently replacing it when the knights had passed through. He then resumed his position at their head, and they swept down on a portion of the besiegers and cut them to pieces.

Meanwhile Leodegrance with the bulk of his army was fighting in another part of the field. Being outnumbered and not having the aid of Merlin they were defeated, and Leodegrance was taken prisoner. Guinevere, his daughter, had been looking at the fight standing on the city wall, and when she saw her father captured she was in dreadful distress and tore her hair and swooned away. As he was being led away to Rience's camp, King Arthur and his knights fell upon his escort and cut them to pieces and rescued the king.

Now as the fight continued, King Arthur encountered a giant named Caulang, full fifteen feet in height; and the fair Guinevere, who already had begun to feel a strong interest in the handsome young stranger, trembled for the issue of the contest. But Arthur dealing a dreadful blow on the shoulder of the monster, cut through his neck so that his head hung on one side, and in this con-

dition his horse carried him over the field to the great horror and dismay of the Pagans. As Guinevere looked upon the scene the wish arose in her heart that the gentle knight who had rescued her father and dealt so dexterously with the giant were destined to become her husband; and the wish was echoed by her attendants.

At length King Rience was utterly routed and his troops fled from the field. The immense spoils of his camp were given up, by order of King Leodegrance, to Arthur, who forthwith divided them among the people of Carohaise, an act which much increased the good will in which he was already held by the people. On his return to the city he was disarmed and conducted to the bath by the fair hands of Guinevere, the king's daughter, whose beauty had already made a deep impression on his heart. A like honor was done unto his companions by the ladies of the court; after which they were all conducted to a rich banquet where they were served by fair attendants.

Leodegrance was more and more anxious to know the name and quality of the brave knights who had aided him in the defeat of his foes. In his heart he felt a secret wish that their leader might be won by the charms of his daughter, and he seemed silent and pensive. Meanwhile Arthur had found an opportunity to disclose his feelings for the fair Guinevere, and each regarded the other with

great esteem and affection. Every day that the knights remained they grew in admiration of the whole court, and they all looked upon the mutual regard of Arthur and Guinevere with approval. At length Merlin announced that the object of their visit was to procure a bride for their leader who, whatever might be his rank, his merits entitled him to the possession of the heiress of Cameliard. Then Leodegrance presented Guinevere to Arthur, and Arthur accepted her with grateful feelings; upon which Merlin unfolded the rank of Arthur, when Leodegrance and all his barons hastened to do homage to their lawful sovereign. The fair Guinevere was then solemnly betrothed to Arthur, and a splendid festival was proclaimed which lasted many days.

CHAPTER III

KING ARTHUR MEETS HIS MOTHER

THUS was King Arthur seated firmly on his throne. But who he was he knew not for no one had yet revealed the mystery of his birth. On a day after hunting in the forest Arthur sat in deep thought over a strange dream that he had dreamed about some sinful deeds that he had done. And as he sat thus in thought, there came to him a child of fourteen years and asked him why he was so pensive. "I may well be pensive," said the king, "for I have seen the most marvelous sight that ever I saw."

"That know I well," said the seeming child, "and I know all thy thoughts. And I can tell thee also who was thy father and thy mother, and how and when thou wert born." "That is false," said King Arthur, "for how should a boy of your years know my father?"

"It is not false," said the child, who was Merlin the enchanter in disguise, "for I know it better than any person living. Your father was King Uther,

and your mother was the fair Igerne." "I will not believe it," said the king; and he was wroth with the child.

Then the child departed, but quickly after that there came to the king an old man of four score years. And he said to the King, "Why are you so sad?" "I may well be sad for many things," said the king, "for here was a child just now who told me things which it seems to me he could not know."

"He told you the truth," said the old man, "and would have told you more if you had listened to him. But you have done a thing which God is displeased with; and your sister shall bear a son which shall destroy you and all the knights of your realm. And that is the meaning of your dream in which griffons and serpents burnt and slew all before them, and wounded you to death."

As Arthur listened he said, "Who are you that tell me these things?" To which the old man replied, "I am Merlin, and I was also the child that came to you." "Ah," said King Arthur, "thou art a marvelous man, but I marvel much of thy words that I must die in battle." "Marvel not," said Merlin," that you shall die, for your death will be a noble one; but I shall die a shameful death, and shall be put in the earth alive for my folly."

As they thus talked, horses were brought and the king and Merlin mounted them and rode to Car-

leon. And anon the king called Sir Ector and Sir Ulfius and asked them if they knew how he was born. And they told him that they had learned from Merlin that King Uther was his father and the Queen Igerne was his mother.

But King Arthur could not believe, and said to Merlin, "I will that the Queen Igerne be sent for, that I may speak with her, and if she says so herself, then will I believe it." So in all haste the queen was sent for, and she came bringing with her Morgan le Fay, her daughter, a fair lady as any might be.

The king made a great feast in honor of the queen and her attendants. In the midst of the feast, Sir Ulfius arose and boldly accused the queen of falsehood and treason. "Beware what you say," cried the king. "They are strong words and this lady is my guest."

"I am well aware of what I speak," said Sir Ulfius, "and here is my glove to prove it on any man who shall deny it. And I declare that Queen Igerne is the cause of your great wars, and of the great damage done to your throne. For had she told in the life of King Uther of your birth you would have never had your great wars; for most of your barons know not to-day of what blood you were born. Therefore I declare her false to God, to you, and to all your realm; and if any man shall say me nay, I stand ready to prove it upon his body."

Then spake Igerne and said, "I am a woman and may not fight; but there are no doubt some men here who will take my quarrel. Merlin will bear me witness that it was King Uther's wish that the birth of my child should not be known; but that he should be delivered to Merlin to care for him as he pleased. And I have never seen the child since and do not know whether he be alive."

Then Merlin took the king by the hand and led him to the Queen Igerne and said, "This is your mother." And therewith Sir Ector bare witness how he had received the boy of Merlin wrapped in a cloth of gold and how he raised him as his own son not knowing who he was, but full sure that he was of noble birth.

At this King Arthur stood for a moment amazed. Then he took his mother, Queen Igerne, by the hand, and kissed her and she him, most lovingly, and they wept in each other's arms. Then the king made a great feast that lasted eight days; and great joy was upon them all to know that the son of the great Uther Pendragon had come to the throne. And far and wide throughout the land the tidings spread that he who had drawn the magic sword was the rightful heir to the crown.

CHAPTER IV

ARTHUR EXTENDS HIS KINGDOM

AND now King Arthur set up his court in Britain and dwelt for many years in peace. To his court he invited men of valor and learning and introduced such courtesy of speech and manners that people from all parts of the world thought worthy of imitation; so that there was not a knight or baron who did not aim to have his clothes and arms made in the same fashion as those of King Arthur's knights.

But in time he began to grow weary of his peaceful life and longed to extend his rule to other countries. So first he sailed to Norway where he fought a great battle with the king of that country and, defeating him, he placed his sister's husband, King Lot, upon the throne. Then he sailed for Gaul and laid siege to the city of Paris. When the siege had lasted a month and the people began to suffer from famine, a famous knight, named Flollo, challenged Arthur to single combat. Arthur gladly met the knight and slew him in the contest,

upon which the citizens gave up the city to him. In a short time all Gaul was subject to his sway; and he set up his court in Paris, and there established a government for the people.

Now while his army was encamped in Gaul, there came a countryman to Arthur and told him that a giant whose cave was on a mountain, called St. Michael's Mount, had for a long time held the custom to carry off the children of the peasants to devour them. "And now," he said, "he hath taken away the Duchess of Brittany, as she rode with her attendants, and hath carried her away in spite of all that they could do."

"Now, fellow," said King Arthur, "canst thou bring me there where this giant haunteth?" "Yea, sure," said the good man; "lo, yonder where thou seest two great fires, there shalt thou find him, and more treasure than I suppose is in all France beside." Then the king called to him Sir Bedevere and Sir Kay, and commanded them to make ready horse and harness for himself and them; for after evening he would ride to St. Michael's Mount.

So they three departed, and rode forth till they came to the foot of the mount. And there the king bade them to tarry while he would go up the mount. So he ascended the hill until he came to a great fire, and there he found an aged woman sitting by a new-made grave, making great sorrow. Then King Arthur saluted her, and asked her

wherefore she made such lamentation; to which she answered, "Sir Knight, speak low, for yonder is a devil, and if he hear thee speak he will come and destroy thee. For ye cannot make resistance to him, he is so fierce and so strong. He hath murdered the Duchess, which here lieth, who was the fairest of all the world, wife to Sir Hoel, Duke of Brittany."

"Dame," said the king, "I come from the noble conqueror King Arthur, to treat with that tyrant." "Fie on such treaties," she said, "for he setteth not by the king, nor by no man else." "Well," said Arthur, "I will accomplish my message for all your fearful words." So he went forth by the crest of the hill, and saw where the giant sat at supper, gnawing on the limb of a man, and baking his broad limbs at the fire, and three fair damsels lying bound, whose lot it was to be devoured in their turn.

When King Arthur beheld that, he had great compassion on them, so that his heart bled for sorrow. Then he hailed the giant, saying, "He that all the world ruleth give thee short life and shameful death. Why hast thou murdered this Duchess? Therefore, come forth, thou caitiff, for this day thou shalt die by my hand."

At this the giant started up, and took a great club, and struck at the king, and smote off his coronal; and in return the king struck him in the

belly with his sword, making a fearful wound. Then the giant threw away his club, and caught the king in his arms and pressed him so that he crushed his ribs. At this the three maidens kneeled down and prayed for help and comfort for King Arthur. And the king weltered and wrenched so that he was at one while under and another time above the giant. And so weltering and wallowing, they rolled down the hill, and ever as they weltered, King Arthur smote him with his dagger; and by good fortune they came where the two knights were. And when the two knights saw the king fast in the giant's arms, they came and loosed him. Then the king commanded Sir Kay to smite off the giant's head, and to set it on the truncheon of a spear, and to fix it on the barbican, that all the people might behold it. This was done, and soon it was known throughout all the country; wherefore the people came and thanked the king. And the king said, "Give your thanks to God; and take ye the giant's spoil and divide it among you." And King Arthur caused a church to be builded on that hill in honor of St. Michael.

CHAPTER V

THE COMBAT BETWEEN ARTHUR AND PELLENORE

AFTER Arthur had subdued all his enemies he came to Camelot and set up his court there in great splendor and many famous knights gathered about him. One day there came into the court a squire riding on horseback leading a knight before him who had been wounded to death. The squire was a young man about the age of Arthur, and his name was Griflet. His master, he said, had been set upon by a powerful knight in the forest who lived in a pavilion beside a spring. "And now I beseech you," he said, "that he may be buried, and that some good knight may avenge his death."

At this there was a great outcry in the court, and many were eager to undertake the adventure; but Griflet besought Arthur that he should give it to him; and also that he should confer upon him the order of knighthood. When the king had heard his request, he said to him that he was too young for so great an honor as that. But Griflet an-

swered him, "My lord, I beseech you to make me a knight, for I wish to avenge my master's death."

Now by chance Merlin heard his request, and he said to the king that it would be a pity not to have him at his court since it seemed that he would be "a passing good man when he became of age." So Arthur, at Merlin's request, made him a knight, and bade him promise that when he had jousted with the knight at the fountain that he would return to court again, which promise Griflet gladly made.

Then Sir Griflet armed himself with a great spear, and rode in great haste till he came to the fountain by the wayside. There under a rich pavilion stood a horse, well saddled and bridled, and on a tree hung a shield with a device of divers colors, and also a great spear. Then Sir Griflet smote upon the shield with the end of his spear, so that the shield fell to the ground. With that the knight came out of his pavilion and said, "Fair knight, why smote you down my shield?" "Because I will joust with you," answered Sir Griflet. "It were better you did not," said the knight, full courteously, "for you are but young and newly made a knight, and your might is as nothing to mine." "Let that be as it may," said Sir Griflet, "but I will joust with you." "I am loth to do so," said the knight; "but since you will have it so, I will dress myself for it. But whence are you, I would

inquire?" "I am of Arthur's court," Sir Griflet said.

Then they mounted their horses and ran together, and Sir Griflet's spear was shivered on the strange knight's shield, and the knight smote Griflet through the shield and wounded him so that knight and horse both fell to the ground. When the knight saw him lying upon the ground, he was sorry, and he alighted and unlaced his helm and set him on his horse and praised him, saying he had a mighty heart and if he lived he would prove a passing good knight. So Sir Griflet rode to court and told his tale as well as he could; but though sorely wounded, through good leeches his life was saved.

Then King Arthur was passing wroth for the hurt of Sir Griflet. And early next morning he armed himself secretly and taking his best horse and bidding his chamberlain to tarry without the city, he rode forth to meet the strange knight. As he rode on his way he saw three churls chasing Merlin, so he galloped toward them crying, "Flee, churls!" and when they saw him they were afraid and fled away.

Then said King Arthur, "O Merlin, thou hadst been slain in spite of all thy craft, had I not been here." But Merlin answered, "Nay, not so, for I could have saved myself if I would; but thou art nearer death than I am. For you are

now going to your death if God do not befriend you."

But the king would not quit the adventure; so he and Merlin rode on until they came to the fountain and the rich pavilion by it. And there they saw the knight sitting in the pavilion armed. "Sir knight," said the king, "for what cause abideth thou here? Is it that no knight may ride this way but that he joust with thee? If that is so I advise thee to leave that custom."

"This custom," said the knight, "have I used, and will use, in spite of any one who may forbid it; and any one who is grieved with it, let him amend it, if he will." "I will amend it," said King Arthur. "And I will defend it," said the knight.

So the knight came out of his pavilion and mounted his horse and dressed his shield and took a spear, and he and the king ran together so hard that their spears were both shivered to pieces, though neither lost his seat. Therewith King Arthur drew his sword. The knight said, "Nay, not so, for it is fairer that we run together again with our spears." "That is well," said King Arthur, "if I had any more spears." "I have spears enough," said the knight; and forthwith there came a squire out of the pavilion bringing two good spears; and Arthur took one and the knight the other. Then they spurred their horses

and came together with all their might so that their spears were again broken.

Then Arthur set hand upon his sword again; but the knight said, "Nay, you shall do better; for you are a passing good jouster as ever I have met; and so for the love of knighthood let us joust once again."

To this King Arthur gave assent, and the squire brought them each another spear. As they rushed together again, King Arthur's spear was shivered in his hand; but the other knight hit him so hard in the midst of his shield that horse and man both fell to the ground. Then was King Arthur sore angered, and he drew his sword and said, "I will essay thee, sir knight, on foot, for I have lost the honor on horseback."

"I will be on horseback," said the stranger. But as the king drew near he sprang from his horse, for he thought it was no honor to have a foeman at such disadvantage. And then began a strong battle with many furious strokes, and so smote they each other that pieces of armor and flesh flew into the fields, and the ground was covered with their blood. And thus they fought, resting awhile and then going at it again, until at last they grew so weary that they could scarce stand. At length it chanced as they smote their swords together, the sword of King Arthur broke into two pieces.

Then said the knight unto Arthur, "Thou art at my mercy, to save thee or to slay thee; and now

if thou dost not yield thyself as recreant, thou shalt die." "As for death," said King Arthur, "welcome be it when it cometh; but as for me to yield to thee as recreant, I had rather die than be so shamed." Then suddenly the king leaped upon the knight and took him by the middle and threw him to the ground. But the strange knight being very strong, he got King Arthur under him and tore off his helm and would have smitten off his head.

Then Merlin, who had stood by, came up and said, "Sir knight, hold thy hand; for if thou slay that knight thou puttest this realm in the greatest damage that ever realm was in, for this knight is of more worship than thou knowest of." "Why, who is he?" said the knight. "It is King Arthur," answered Merlin.

Then the strange knight raised his hand again to kill the king, for he dreaded his wrath; but Merlin cast an enchantment upon him so that he fell to the earth in a great sleep. Then Merlin placed King Arthur on his horse again and he mounted the knight's horse, and they rode away together. "Alas!" said King Arthur, "what hast thou done, Merlin? Hast thou slain that good knight by thy crafts? There lives not so worshipful a knight as he; and I had rather the loss of my lands for a year than that he should die."

"Fear not," said Merlin, "for he is more whole than yourself; for he is asleep and will waken within

three hours. I told you what a knight he was, and you would have been slain by him had I not been there. There liveth not a better knight than he is, and he shall hereafter do you right good service. His name is Pellenore,—the same that hath slain King Lot,—and he shall have two sons who shall be passing good men; the one shall be named Percevale of Wales and the other Lamorache of Wales; and they shall tell you the name of your sister's son that shall be the destruction of all this realm."

CHAPTER VI

HOW KING ARTHUR GOT HIS SWORD EXCALIBUR

THEN Merlin took the wounded king to a hermit who was a holy man and a great leech. The hermit searched his wounds and dressed them with a healing salve; and the king was there three days until all his wounds were healed. Then they departed; and as they rode Arthur said, "I have no sword." "No matter," answered Merlin, "for I know where there is a sword for you."

So they rode till they came to a lake, which was fair and broad; and as Arthur looked he saw in the middle of the lake an arm raised above the water clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in the hand. And Merlin said, "Lo, yonder is the sword of which I spake." And with that they saw a damsel going upon the lake.

"What damsel is that?" asked the king. "That is the Lady of the Lake," replied Merlin; "and this damsel will come to you anon, and then speak you fair to her and she will give you the sword." So the damsel came unto Arthur, and saluted him, and he saluted her again.

Then said Arthur, "Damsel, what sword is that which yonder arm holdeth above the water? I would it were mine, for I have no sword." "Sir King," replied the damsel, "that sword is mine, and if you will give me a gift when I ask for it, you shall have the sword." "By my faith," said King Arthur, "I will give you whatever gift you shall ask." "Well," said the damsel, "go you into yonder barge, and row yourself out to the sword, and take it and the scabbard with you; and I will ask for my gift when I see my time."

So King Arthur and Merlin alighted, and tied their horses to two trees, and went into the boat; and when they came to the sword that the hand held, King Arthur took it by the handle, and the arm and the hand sunk immediately under the water. So they came again to the shore with the sword, and mounting their horses they rode forth.

And as they rode they came to a rich pavilion, when Arthur said, "What meaneth that pavilion?" "It is the knight's pavilion," Merlin said, "the knight that you fought with, whose name is Sir Pellenore; but he is not there, as he hath had ado with a knight of yours named Egglame; and they fought together, but at last Egglame fled, for else he would have been killed, and Pellenore chased him to Caerleon, and we shall now meet him on the way." "It is well," quoth King Arthur, "for now I have a sword, and I will wage battle with him,

if I meet him, and be avenged upon him." But Merlin answered, "Sir, you shall not do so, for the knight is weary of fighting and chasing, so that you would have no honor in doing so. Besides he will lightly be matched by any one knight living; and therefore my counsel is to let him pass, for he shall do you good service in a short time, and his sons also in after days."

To this King Arthur said, "When I see him I will do as you advise me." Then King Arthur looked upon his sword and liked it passing well; and said to Merlin, "I like the sword better than the scabbard." But Merlin answered, "In that you are unwise, for the scabbard is worth ten of the sword, for while you have the scabbard upon you you shall lose no blood however sore you may be wounded; therefore keep carefully the scabbard always with you." Moreover Merlin told him that the name of the sword was *Excalibur*, which signifies "cut steel," and with this sword Arthur did many mighty deeds.

So they rode toward Caerleon, and by the way they met Sir Pellenore. But Merlin cast a spell so that Pellenore saw not Arthur, and so passed by him without any words. Then said the king, "I marvel that the knight did not speak." And Merlin said, "Sir, he saw you not, for if he had seen you he would not lightly have departed."

So they came to Caerleon, whereof the knights

were passing glad. And when they heard of King Arthur's adventures, they marveled that he would risk his person so alone. But all the men of worship said it was merry to be under such a chieftain that would put his person in peril as other poor knights did.

THE BOOK OF THE ROUND TABLE

CHAPTER I

QUEEN GUINEVERE AND THE ROUND TABLE

IN the beginning of the reign of King Arthur who was chosen king by the adventure of the sword, the most of the barons did not know that he was the son of Uther Pendragon. So, many of them made a great war against King Arthur; but he overcame them all. And in these wars as in all things else he was much ruled by the counsel of Merlin.

So it befell upon a time that King Arthur said to Merlin, "My barons will let me have no rest, but they needs will have me take a wife; and I will take no counsel in this matter but thy own." "It is well done," said Merlin, "that ye take a wife, for a man of your bounty and nobleness should not be without a wife. Now is there any fair lady that ye love better than another?"

"Yes," said King Arthur, "I love Guinevere, the

daughter of King Leodegrance, of the land of Cameliard; and King Leodegrance holdeth in his house the Table Round that ye told me that he had of my father Uther. And this damsel is the gentlest and the fairest lady that I know living, or yet that I ever could find."

"Sir," said Merlin, "as of her beauty and fairness she is one of the fairest that lives; but if ye loved her not as well as ye do, I would find you another damsel of beauty and goodness, that should like you and please you; but I see that your heart is set upon her, and where a man's heart is set he will be loth to return."

"That is truth," said Arthur. But Merlin warned the king privily that Guinevere was not wholesome for him to take to wife, for that in time another knight would love her, even Launcelot, and she him in return. But the king would have none other than Guinevere, so Merlin desired of the king to have men with him and he would go and inquire of Guinevere whether she would be King Arthur's wife; and so the king granted him.

Then Merlin went forth to King Leodegrance of Cameliard, and told him of the desire of the king: that he would have for his wife his daughter Guinevere. "That is to me," said King Leodegrance, "the best tidings that I ever heard, that so worthy a king of prowess and nobleness will wed my daughter; and, as for my lands, I would give him

much if it please him; but he hath land enough already. But I shall send him a gift that shall please him much more; for I shall give him the Table Round, the which his father, Uther Pendragon, gave me."

Now the Round Table had been ordained by Uther Pendragon, King Arthur's father, at the suggestion of Merlin, the enchanter. It consisted of a hundred and fifty knights who sat around in the form of a circle. These knights were the noblest and the bravest that the world ever saw, and did the most marvelous deeds that the world ever knew. No one could be admitted to the order unless he was of royal or noble blood, or was noted for great strength or skill in arms, or for deeds of valor. They were all required to swear a solemn oath to give aid to one another even at peril of their lives; to be ever ready to undertake dangerous adventures; to be faithful to their liege lord; and to be willing on all occasions to defend and protect the weaker sex from wrong.

And so King Leodegrance delivered his daughter Guinevere unto Merlin, and also the Table Round, with a hundred knights, there being a lack of fifty, so many having been killed in the wars. And so they rode freshly forth with great royalty, till they came to London.

When King Arthur heard of the coming of Guinevere, and the hundred knights of the Round

THE . COMING .
OF . GVINEVERE .

Table, his heart was filled with joy; and he said openly, "This fair lady is passing welcome to me, for I have loved her long, and therefore there is nothing so pleasing to me; and these knights with the Round Table please me more than great riches."

Then in all haste the king arranged for the marriage and the coronation, in the most honorable wise that could be devised. And King Arthur said to Merlin, "Go thou through the land and select for me fifty knights of most prowess and worship." So Merlin went with the best speed he could, and found twenty-eight good knights; but no more could be found. Then the Archbishop of Canterbury was sent for; and he blessed the seats, called sieges, of his Round Table with great royalty and devotion; and there sat the twenty-eight knights in their seats. And when this was done, Merlin said, "Fair sirs, ye must all arise and come unto King Arthur to do him homage; and he will have the better will to maintain you." And so they arose and did their homage to the king.

And when they were gone, Merlin found in the sieges letters of gold that told the knights' names that had sat therein. But two sieges were vacant. And anon came young Gawaine, and asked the king for a gift. "Ask," said the king, "and I shall grant it." "Sir," said Gawaine, "I ask that ye will make me a knight the same day that ye shall wed

fair Guinevere." "I will do it with a good will," said King Arthur, "and give you all the worship that I may; for I must do so by reason you are my nephew and sister's son."

And anon there came a poor man into the court and brought with him a fair young man of eighteen years of age, riding upon a lean mare. And when the poor man came before the king he saluted him and said, "O King Arthur, the flower of all knights and kings, I beseech Jesu to save thee. It was told me that at the time of your marriage ye would give any man the gift that he would ask unless it was unreasonable."

"That is true," said the king, "so I have said and so I will do, if it impair not my realm or my estate." "That is graciously said," replied the poor man, "and now what I ask is that ye make my son here a knight."

"That is a great thing to ask," said the king. "What is thy name?" And the poor man replied, "My name is Aries the cowherd; and this desire cometh not from me, but from my son. For I have thirteen sons and all of them do labor; but this son would never work like the others, but will always be shooting or casting darts, glad to see battles and knights; and both day and night desireth of me that he may become a knight."

Then Arthur turning to the young man said, "What is thy name?" And the young man replied,

"My name is Tor." Then the king looked at him and saw that he was well visaged and passingly well made for his years. So he said, "Where is the sword that ye shall be made knight withal?" "It is here," answered Tor.

Then Tor alighted from his mare and pulled out his sword, and kneeling asked the king that he would make him a knight of the Round Table. And the king taking his sword smote him lightly on the neck saying, "Be a good knight; and so I pray to God ye may be; and if ye be of prowess and of worthiness, ye shall be a knight of the Round Table."

Then Arthur called to Merlin and asked him to tell him whether this Tor would be a good knight or no. And Merlin said, "Yea, sir, he ought to be a good knight, for he is come of a good man as any one alive, for he is not the son of the cowherd, but King Pellenore is his father."

At this the cowherd was greatly surprised, and he would not believe it at first; but when inquiry was made he found that Merlin had spoken the truth, and that Tor was really the son of King Pellenore. On the morrow, as it chanced, King Pellenore came to the court of King Arthur, and Arthur told him of Tor, how he was his son, and how he had made him a knight at the request of the cowherd. And when King Pellenore beheld Tor he was much pleased with him.

And the king said to Merlin, "What is the cause that there are two places vacant in the sieges?" "Sir," said Merlin, "there shall no man sit in those places but they shall be of most worship. And in the Seat Perilous, there shall no man sit therein but one; and if there be any so hardy to do it, he shall be destroyed; and he that shall sit there shall have no fellow." And therewith Merlin took King Pellenore by the hand and led him to one of the highest seats at the Round Table, and said before them all that he was more worthy to sit thereon than any other there.

At this Sir Gawaine was very angry with envy, and said to Gaheris, his brother, "Yonder knight is put unto great worship; which grieveth me sore, for he slew our father, King Lot; therefore I will slay him." "Ye shall not do so," said Gaheris, "at this time, for I am yet but a squire; but when I am made a knight, I will be avenged on him. Therefore, brother, it is best that ye wait till another time when we have him out of court, for if we slay him now we shall trouble this high feast." And Gawaine replied, "Let it be as ye will."

Then the feast was made ready and the king was wedded at Camelot unto dame Guinevere, in the church of St. Stevens, with great solemnity. And as every man was seated according to his degree, Merlin went unto all the knights of the Round Table and bade them sit still and that none should

remove, "for," he said, "ye shall see a marvelous adventure."

So as they all sat still, there came running a white hart into the hall, and close after him a white hound, and thirty couples of black hounds came running after them with a great cry. The hart went about the Table Round, and as he went by the other tables, the white hound caught him and tore out a piece of flesh from his thigh, whereat the hart took a great leap and overthrew a knight that sat beside the table. And therewith the knight arose and took up the hound and so went forth out of the hall, and took his horse, and rode on his way with the hound.

Soon after there came in a lady mounted on a white palfrey, and cried aloud to King Arthur, saying, "Sir, suffer me not to have despite, for the hound was mine that the knight led away." With this there came an armed knight riding on a great horse, and took the lady with him by force; and she cried and made a great uproar.

When the lady was gone, Merlin, speaking to the king, said that unless these adventures were taken up it would be a great dishonor; to which the king said that whatever he advised should be done. Then said Merlin, "Let us call Sir Gawaine, for he must bring again the white hart; also ye must call Sir Tor, for he must bring again the hound and the knight, or else slay him; also let us call Sir

Pellenore, for he must bring again the lady and the knight, or else slay him; and these three knights shall do marvelous adventures ere they come again."

Then they were all three called, and each of them took his charge to make their quests as had been said; and they armed themselves accordingly and set forth without delay.

CHAPTER II

THE QUEST OF GAWAINE

NOW Sir Gawaine rode forth on his quest and his brother Gaheris rode with him in place of a squire. When they had gone some little way they saw two knights fighting on horseback. So Sir Gawaine rode between them and asked them for what cause they fought so fiercely.

And one of the knights answered, saying, "We fight for a simple matter, for we are two brothers, born and begotten of one man and of one woman." "Alas," said Sir Gawaine, "why do ye do so?" "Sir," said the elder knight, "there came a white hart this way to-day, and many hounds chasing it, and a white hound was always near it; and we understood that it was an adventure made for the high feast of King Arthur. As I was the elder, I thought I should have gone after it; but my younger brother said that he was a better knight than I, and that he should go after it; and for this cause we fell to fighting to prove which of us is the better knight."

"This is a simple cause for fighting," said Sir

Gawaine, "for ye should fight with strange men, and not brother with brother. Therefore if ye will not take my counsel ye shall fight with me or yield unto me, that ye may go to King Arthur and yield unto his grace."

"Sir knight," said the two brothers, "we are weary with our fight and much blood have we lost through our wilfulness; and therefore we would be loth to have an ado with you. We will therefore do as you have bidden; but by whom shall we say that we were sent thither?" "Ye may say by the knight that followeth the quest of the white hart. But I would also know your names," said Gawaine. "My name is Sorlouise of the Forest," said the elder; "And my name," said the younger, "is Brian of the Forest." And so they departed and went to King Arthur's court.

And as Sir Gawaine and Gaheris followed the hart by the cry of the hounds, they came to a great river; and the hart swam over. But as Sir Gawaine would have followed after, he saw a knight standing on the other side who said, "Sir knight, come not over after the hart unless you will joust with me."

To this Sir Gawaine replied, "I will not fail to follow the quest I am in." So he made his horse to swim over the water; and when he reached the other side the two knights got their spears ready and ran together full hard; and Sir Gawaine smote

the knight from his horse, and then turned upon him and bade him yield. "Nay," said the knight, "not so, though you have the better of me on horseback. I pray thee to alight and match me with your sword." "What is your name?" said Sir Gawaine. "Allardin of the Isles," said the knight.

Then Sir Gawaine alighted from his horse, and the two knights rushed together with their swords, and Sir Gawaine smote him through the helm so hard that the sword pierced even to his brains, and the knight fell down dead. "Ah," said Gaheris, "that was a mighty stroke for a young knight."

Then Sir Gawaine and Gaheris rode after the hart and chased it into a castle and set on it six greyhounds who slew the hart. At this a knight came out of the castle with a sword in his hand and slew two of the hounds and chased the others with the sword out of the castle. Then he said, "Oh, my white hart, I am sorry thou art dead, for my sovereign lady gave thee to me, and thy death will cost me dear, if I live."

Then Sir Gawaine said to him, "Why hast thou slain my hounds? for they did but as their kind; I had rather ye would have wreaked your anger on me." "Thou sayest truth," said the knight; "I have avenged me on thy hounds, and so I will on thee." Then they dressed their shields and drew their swords and smote each other so mightily that they clave their shields and stunned their helms,

and broke their havelocks, so that the blood ran down to their feet. At last Sir Gawaine smote the knight so hard that he fell to the earth; and then he yielded himself and cried for mercy.

But Sir Gawaine said, "Thou shalt die, for slaying my hounds." "I will make amends as I am able," said the knight. But Sir Gawaine would show no mercy, and unlaced his helm and drew his sword to strike off his head. Suddenly the knight's lady came out of her chamber and rushing to the knight fell on him to shield him, and Gawaine not seeing her smote off her head instead of the knight's.

"Alas," said Gaheris, "that is foully and shamefully done, and the shame of that blow will never leave you. Moreover, you should give mercy unto them that ask mercy, for a knight without mercy is without worship." But Sir Gawaine was so bewildered at the death of the fair lady that for a moment he knew not what he did; and anon he said to the knight, "Arise, and I will give you mercy." "Nay, nay," said the knight, "I will have no mercy now, for thou hast slain my love and my lady, one whom I loved best of all earthly things."

"I regret it sorely," said Gawaine, "for I thought to have stricken at you; but now thou shalt go to King Arthur, and tell him of your adventure and how you were overcome by the knight that went in quest of the white hart." "I

care not whether I live or die," said the knight; but nevertheless, for dread of death he swore to go to King Arthur, and agreed to bear one greyhound before him upon his horse and another behind him. Then telling Sir Gawaine that his name was Ablamore of the Marsh, he departed towards Camelot.

Then Sir Gawaine went into the castle and made ready to remain there all night. And he would have unarmed himself, but Gaheris said that he should not unarm himself in a place where there may be enemies about. And even as he spake there came four knights well armed, and assailed Sir Gawaine, saying unto him, "Thou new-made knight, thou hast shamed thy knighthood, for a knight without mercy is dishonored. Thou hast also slain a fair lady which is unto thee a shame forevermore."

And therewith one of the knights smote Sir Gawaine such a stroke that it came near felling him to the earth; and another knight with a bow and archer smote him through the arm; and the four knights were such dangerous fighters that both Gawaine and Gaheris were in peril of their lives. Now as they both might have been slain, there came four ladies out of the castle and besought the four knights for grace on behalf of Sir Gawaine. And at the request of the ladies they gave Sir Gawaine and Gaheris their lives, and made them yield themselves as prisoners. And Sir Gawaine made

great moan for his arm, saying, "Alas, my arm grieveth me sore, and I am like to be maimed."

On the morrow early came one of the four ladies to Sir Gawaine, one who had heard his complaint, and said, "Sir Gawaine, what cheer?" "Not good," Sir Gawaine replied. "It is your own default," said the lady, "for ye have done a passing foul deed in slaying the lady, which will be a great villainy to you. But are ye not Arthur's kin?" said the lady. "Yes, truly," said Gawaine. "What is your name?" said the lady, "ye must tell it before you can pass." "My name is Gawaine, King Lot's son, and my mother is King Arthur's sister."

"Ah, then ye are nephew to King Arthur," said the lady, "and I shall so speak for you that ye shall have conduct to go to King Arthur for his list." And so she departed and told the four knights how their prisoner was King Arthur's nephew, and his name was Gawaine. Then they gave him the head of the white hart, as it was his quest.

Then anon they let him go with the promise that he bear the dead body of the lady with him in this manner: her head was hanging about his neck, and her whole body lay before him on the mane of his horse; and in this manner he rode toward Camelot. And when he came to court and told of his adventure, the king and queen were greatly displeased with him that he had refused mercy to the knight, and for the slaying of the lady. And they set an

inquest of ladies on Sir Gawaine, and their sentence was that ever while he lived he should be an especial champion of ladies, that he should fight for their quarrels, and be ever courteous, and never refuse mercy to him that asketh mercy.

This Gawaine swore to perform, on the books of the four Evangelists. And thus endeth the adventures of Sir Gawaine, which he did at the marriage of King Arthur.

CHAPTER III

THE QUEST OF SIR TOR

THE second quest was that of Sir Tor. As soon as he was ready he mounted his horse and rode forth at a good pace after the knight with the hound. On his way he met a dwarf who struck his horse on the head with his staff so that he went backward more than his spear's length.

At this Sir Tor said to the dwarf, "For what intent dost thou smite my horse?" "That thou shalt not pass this way," answered the dwarf, "unless thou first joust with yonder knights that abide in yonder pavilions which thou seest." Then Sir Tor, looking up, saw two pavilions set up by the roadside, with great spears standing out and two shields hung on two trees by the pavilions.

As Sir Tor stood looking upon them, there came out of one pavilion a knight full armed, on horseback; and he came fast toward Sir Tor; and Sir Tor met him and rode upon him and bore him down from his horse. As the knight yielded himself he said, "I have a fellow in yon pavilion that

will also have with you anon." "He shall be welcome," said Sir Tor.

Then the other knight came riding forth, and as he and Sir Tor rushed together the knight smote Sir Tor a great stroke in the midst of his shield, and his spear was all shivered; and Sir Tor smote him through the shield and wounded the knight in the side, but did not slay him. Then Sir Tor alighted from his horse and smote him with his sword upon the helm; and therewith the knight yielded and besought him of mercy. "I will grant thee mercy," said Sir Tor, "but thou and thy fellow must go unto King Arthur and yield yourselves prisoners to him." "By whom shall we say we were sent hither?" said the knight. "Ye shall say," said Sir Tor, "by the knight that went with the hound."

At this came the dwarf and said to Sir Tor, "I pray you, give me a gift." "I will," said Sir Tor, "but what is the gift that you desire?" "I ask no more," said the dwarf, "but that ye will suffer me to be in your service, for I serve no more recreant knights." "Then take a horse," said Sir Tor, "and come on and ride with me after the knight with the white hound." "I shall bring you where he is," said the dwarf, and so they rode through the forest, and the dwarf brought him to two pavilions near by a priory, at one of which hung a white shield and at the other a red shield.

Therewith Sir Tor alighted and gave the dwarf

his spear, and so came to the white pavilion and saw there three damsels in it lying on a pallet sleeping. And then he went to the other pavilion, and therein he found a fair lady sleeping; and there was the white hound at her feet. And when the hound saw Sir Tor, it bayed so lustily that the lady awoke and went out of the pavilion with all her damsels. And Sir Tor took the white hound in his arms and gave it in charge of his dwarf.

And the lady said, "Sir knight, you will not take away my hound from me?" "That must I do," said Sir Tor, "for this hound have I sought from King Arthur's court to this place." "Well," said the lady, "you may take it if you will, but you shall not go far with it until you shall be met and punished." "I shall abide whatever adventure cometh," said Sir Tor, and so he mounted his horse and rode towards Camelot.

As the night came on he asked the dwarf if he knew of any place where they might lodge. "I know of none," said the dwarf, "but here beside the hermitage; but we must take such lodging as we can find." And so they came to the hermitage and took lodging. And on the morrow as they left, Sir Tor besought the hermit to pray for him; and so he mounted his horse and rode on toward Camelot.

And anon they heard a knight behind them calling aloud, saying, "Sir knight, abide and yield me

the hound that ye took from my lady." At this Sir Tor turned his horse and saw that he was a seemly knight and well horsed, and armed at every point. So Sir Tor dressed his shield and took his spear in his hand, as the other knight came riding fiercely upon him. And they smote each other so that both horses and men fell to the earth. Then they lightly arose, and drew their swords, and rushed upon each other like lions, and smote through their shields and wounded each other so that the blood ran to the ground. At length both became very weary. But Sir Tor espied that the other knight was faint, so he rushed upon him and doubled his strokes, and smote him to the ground.

"Now yield ye to my mercy, sir knight," said Sir Tor. "That I will not," said the knight, "while my life lasteth, and the soul is within my body, unless that thou wilt give me the hound." "That will I not," said Sir Tor, "for it was my quest to bring again the hound and thee to King Arthur, or else slay thee."

With that a damsel came riding on a palfrey, as fast as she might drive, and cried with a loud voice unto Sir Tor. "What will ye with me?" said Sir Tor to the damsel. "I beseech thee," said the damsel, "for King Arthur's love, that ye give me a gift; I ask this, gentle knight, as thou art a gentleman." "Well," said Sir Tor, "ask a gift and I will give it you."

Then the damsel said, "I ask the head of this false knight, Abellius, for he is the most outrageous knight that liveth, and the greatest murderer." "I am right sorry," said Sir Tor, "of the gift that I have granted; but let him make thee amends in that which he hath done thee wrong." "He cannot make amends," said the damsel, "for he hath slain my own brother, which was a better knight than ever he was, and he had no mercy upon him, inasmuch as I kneeled half an hour in the mire before him to save my brother's life, who had done him no wrong, but only fought with him as knights of adventure do. And for all I could do or say he smote off my brother's head; wherefore, I require thee, as thou art a true knight, to give me my gift, or else I shall shame thee in all the court of King Arthur, for he is the falsest knight living, and a great destroyer of good knights."

When Abellius heard this he was sore afraid, and yielded himself and asked for mercy. And when Sir Tor would not promise it he sprang to his feet and fled. But Sir Tor ran after him and caught him and smote off his head. Then the lady took Sir Tor to her home and she and her husband made good cheer for him. And on the morrow he heard mass and broke his fast, and then took his leave of the knight and his lady, and came to Camelot on the third day at noon.

The king and the queen and all the court were

passing glad at his coming, and made great joy to receive him, for he went from the court with little help. And when he told his adventures, Merlin said, "These are but trifles to what he shall do; for he shall prove a noble knight of prowess, as good as any living, and gentle and courteous, and full of good parts, and passing true to his promise."

At these words of Merlin, King Arthur gave Sir Tor an earldom of lands that had fallen to the king. And so endeth the quest of Sir Tor, the son of King Pellenore.

CHAPTER IV

THE QUEST OF KING PELLENORE

THEN King Pellenore armed himself and mounted his horse and rode away after the lady that the knight had carried away. And as he rode in the forest he saw a damsel sitting by a well with a wounded knight in her arms. As King Pellenore saluted her she cried to him, "Help me, knight, for Christ's sake."

But King Pellenore was so eager in his quest that he would not tarry; and the lady cried more than a hundred times to him for help. And when she saw that he would not abide she prayed unto God that He would send him as much need of help as she had, and that he might know it ere he died. Presently the wounded knight died, and the lady, out of pure sorrow, slew herself with her lover's sword.

As King Pellenore rode on through the valley, he met with a poor laboring man; and said to him, "Sawest thou not a knight riding and leading away a lady?" "Yes," said the poor man, "I saw the knight, and the lady was making a great moan;

and yonder in the valley he met another knight, and they are fighting for her, and she is left in keeping of their squires." "God thank thee," said King Pellenore; and he rode his horse upon a gallop till he came to the place where the two knights were fighting.

Soon he saw the lady that was his quest, and said to her, "Fair lady, ye must come with me to King Arthur's court." "Sir knight," said the two squires that were with her, "go to them and part them, and be agreed with them, and then may ye have the lady at your pleasure." "Ye say well," said King Pellenore; and anon he rode between them and parted them and asked the cause why they fought.

Then one of them said, "This lady is my kinswoman, and when I heard her complain that she was with this knight against her will, I waged battle with him that he should release her." "Sir knight," said the other, "this lady is mine, for I won her by my prowess of arms at King Arthur's court." "That is untruly said," quoth King Pellenore, "for ye came there suddenly and took away this lady before any one could prevent it. Therefore it is my quest to bring her back again and you also, or else one of us will abide in the field. For the lady shall go with me to King Arthur, so fight no more, or if ye list to fight for her, ye will fight with me and I will defend her."

"Well," said the knight, "make ready and we shall strive with you with all our power." Now the knight was on foot, and as King Pellenore was getting off his horse to fight him evenly in the field, he came up craftily and ran his horse through with the sword, saying, "Now thou art on foot as well as we."

When King Pellenore saw that his horse was thus slain, he was exceeding wroth, and he drew out his sword and put his shield before him and cried, "Knight, keep well thy head; for thou shalt have a buffet for slaying my horse." So saying, King Pellenore gave the knight such a stroke upon the helm that he clave down the head to the chin, and therewith the knight fell to the earth and died.

And then he turned him to the other knight who was sore wounded; but when he saw the buffet that the other had received, he would not fight; but kneeled down and said, "Take the lady, my cousin, with you; but as a true knight, put her to no shame or villainy." "What," said King Pellenore, "will ye not fight for her?" "No, sir," said the knight, "I will not fight with a knight of such prowess as you."

"Well," said King Pellenore, "I promise you she shall be well cared for, as I am a true knight. But now I have no horse, so I will take this dead knight's horse." "Ye shall not need it," said the knight, "for I shall give you such a horse as shall please you; and now you will lodge with me to-

night." So King Pellenore agreed to abide with him all night.

And on the morrow he heard a mass and afterward dined; and then they brought to him a fair bay courser, with King Pellenore's saddle upon him. Then they asked him his name, and when he told them that he was King Pellenore, the knight, whose name was Sir Meliot, said that he was right glad to have the lady, his cousin, in charge of so noble a man. And so King Pellenore departed with the lady to bring her to Camelot.

As they rode in a valley that was full of stones, the lady's horse stumbled and threw her down, and bruised her arm so that she nearly swooned for pain. So he alighted from his horse and laid the lady on the grass and laid himself under a tree and slept until it was night. Then as it was so dark they could not see their way to ride further, King Pellenore took off his armor to rest there for the night.

Now a little before midnight they heard the tramping of a horse. "Be ye still," said King Pellenore, "for we shall have some adventure." Therewith he armed himself and waited. Soon he saw right before him two knights; the one had come from Camelot and the other from the north; and as they met they saluted each other. "What tidings at Camelot?" said one of the knights. "By my head," said the other, "I have been there and

espied the court of King Arthur; and there is such fellowship there that may never be broken, and well nigh all the world holdeth with King Arthur; for there is the flower of chivalry. And I am riding north to tell our chieftains of the fellowship that is withholden with King Arthur."

"As for that," said the other knight, "I have a remedy with me that is the greatest poison that was ever heard speak of, and I will take it to Camelot; for we have a friend right nigh to King Arthur that shall poison the king; so he hath promised our chieftains, and hath received great gifts to do it." "Beware," said the other knight, "of Merlin, for he knoweth all things by the craft of magic." "Therefore will I not permit it," said the knight. And so they parted asunder. Anon King Pellenore made himself ready, and also his lady, and they rode towards Camelot. As they came by the well where the lady and the wounded knight had lain, they found that the lady had been eaten by lions all but the head; wherefore he wept passing sore, and said, "Alas, her life I might have saved, but I was so fierce in my quest that I would not wait. And my heart mourneth sore for her death, for she was a passing fair lady, and so young."

Then his lady said, "Now shall ye do as I bid you; take this knight and bring him in a hermitage, and then take the lady's head and bear it with you to King Arthur's court." So King Pelle-

nore took the dead knight upon his shoulders and bore him to the hermitage and charged the hermit to bury him, and that service should be done for his soul.

Then they departed bearing with them the head of the lady with fair yellow hair; which grieved King Pellenore passing sore when he looked on it, for much he cast his heart on the visage. And so by noon they came to Camelot; and King Arthur and Queen Guinevere were passing glad at his coming to the court; and there he told them all the truth of his quest.

"Ah, Sir Pellenore," said the queen, "ye were greatly to blame that ye saved not the lady's life." "Madam," said King Pellenore, "I was so furious in my quest that I would not wait, and I repent and shall do so all my days." "Truly," said Merlin, "ye ought sorely to repent it; for the lady was your own daughter, born of the Lady of the Rule; and the knight that was dead was her lover, and should have wedded her, and he was a right good knight, and was coming to King Arthur's court. And because ye have done this thing, ye shall see your best friend fail you when you are in greatest distress, and shall leave you there as ye shall be slain."

And thus ended the three quests of the hart, and the hound, and the lady, which were the first adventures that befell in King Arthur's court after he was married to the lady Guinevere.

And now, when all the quests were done,—the quest of the white hart that Sir Gawaine followed, the quest of the hound by Sir Tor, and the quest of the lady that the knight took away by King Pellenore,— then King Arthur established all his knights, and gave lands to those who were not rich, and charged them never to do outrage or murder, and always to flee treason; also by no means to be cruel, but to give mercy unto him that asked mercy, upon pain of forfeiture of the friendship of King Arthur; and always to succor ladies and damsels and gentlewomen, upon pain of death; also that no man take any battle in a wrong quarrel nor for worldly goods.

Unto this were all the knights sworn of the Round Table, both old and young; and every year they were sworn at the high feast of Pentecost.

THE BOOK OF BALIN

CHAPTER I

HOW BALIN DREW THE DAMSEL'S SWORD

AND now tidings came to the king that King Rience of North Wales had invaded his land and was slaying his people. So he sent out a herald to call his knights to arms; and they all assembled at Camelot where they held high festival.

One day as King Arthur was sitting in the great hall of the palace holding council with his barons, there came a damsel bearing a message from the great Lady Lyle of Avalon. She wore a mantle richly furred; and when she let it fall from her shoulders it was seen that she was girded with a noble sword. At this the king had great marvel, and said, "Damsel, for what cause are ye girded with that sword? Such gear beseemeth not a lady."

The damsel answered, "Now shall I tell you that this sword that I am girded with doth me great

sorrow and is an encumbrance, for I may not be delivered of it but by a good knight; and he must be a passing strong man with his hands and of his deeds, and without villainy or treachery. If I can find such a knight, then he may draw out the sword from the scabbard, and so shall I be rid of the enchantment that belongs to it. But never yet have I found any knight that could draw the sword. I have been at the court of King Rience, for I was told that there were many passing good knights; but he and all his knights have tried it without avail."

When King Arthur heard this he said, "This is a great marvel, but if this be true I will myself essay to draw out the sword, not presuming that I am the best knight, but I will give an example to my barons, that they also may essay it." So King Arthur took the sword by the sheath and by the girdle, and pulled eagerly at it; but the sword would not come out.

"Sir," said the damsel, "ye need not pull half so hard, for he that shall pull it out shall do so with little might." "Then," answered Arthur, "this achievement is not for me. So now, my barons, let all of you essay it; but beware ye are not defiled with shame, treachery, or guile."

Then many of the barons and the knights of the Round Table essayed to draw the sword, one after another, but none of them could achieve it. Where-

fore the damsel made great sorrow out of measure, saying, "Alas! I thought in this court I could find the best knights without treachery or treason." "By my faith," said Arthur, "here are good knights as, I deem, are any in the world; but their grace is not to help you, for which I am very sorry."

Now there chanced to be in the hall at that time a poor knight, named Balin le Savage, who had been a prisoner half a year and more for slaying a knight that was cousin to King Arthur. Though he had no estate, yet was he of good blood and great prowess. He had slain the knight in fair fight, so by the good offices of the barons he had been pardoned and delivered out of prison. So he went privily into court and saw the other knights essay to draw the sword, and would have tried it himself, but because he was poor and poorly arrayed, he did not come forward, though in his heart he was fully assured that he could do as well as any knight that was there.

Now as the damsel was about to take her leave of King Arthur and the barons, Balin took courage and said to her, "Damsel, I pray you of your courtesy to suffer me to essay the sword; for though I be poorly clothed, in my heart I feel fully assured that I may do right well."

At this the damsel turned to look upon the knight and saw that he was a likely man in body, but because he was so poorly clad she thought he

could be of no worship. So she said to him, "Sir, there is no need to put me to any more pain or labor, for it seemeth not that you should succeed where others have failed."

"Ah, fair damsel," said Balin, "worthiness and good deeds are not all alone in raiment, but in him who wears it; and manhood and worship are bred within a man's person, and many a worshipful knight is not known to all people." "Ye speak truly," said the damsel, "therefore ye shall essay to do what ye may."

Then Balin took the sword by the girdle and the sheath, and drew it out easily; and when he looked upon the sword he was much pleased with it. Then the king and his barons greatly wondered that Balin had done what they had failed to do; and some of the knights had great spite at Balin. But the damsel said, "This is a passing good knight, and the best man that ever I found, and most noble without treachery or villainy; and many marvels he shall do. Now, gentle and courteous knight," she said, "give me the sword again." "Nay," said Balin, "for this sword I will keep, unless it be taken from me by force." "Well," said the damsel, "ye are not wise to keep the sword from me, for ye shall slay with the sword the best friend that ye have, and the man ye most love in the world; and the sword shall be your destruction."

"I shall take the chance," said Balin, "that God

will ordain me, but the sword ye shall not have at this time, by the faith of my body." "Ye shall repent it within a short time," said the damsel, "for I would have the sword more for your sake than for my own; and I am passing sorry for your sake; for ye will not believe that this sword will be your destruction, and that is a great pity." With that the damsel departed in great sorrow.

Then Balin sent for his horse and his armor, being minded to depart from the court and he took his leave of King Arthur. But the king said, "Nay, I hope ye will not depart so lightly from this fellowship. I suppose you are displeased that I have showed you unkindness; but blame me not since I did not know that you were a knight of such worship and prowess—and now, if ye will, abide in this court among my fellowship—I shall so advance you as ye shall be pleased."

But Balin said, "God thank your lordship; for your bounty and highness may no man praise half to their value; but at this time I must needs depart, beseeching you always of your good grace." "Truly," said the king, "I am right sorry for your departing; but I pray you, fair knight, that ye tarry not long, and ye shall be right welcome to me and my barons, and I shall amend all amiss that I have done against you."

Then Balin thanked the king again, and therewith made ready to depart. And as he rode away,

many of the knights of the Round Table said that Balin did not this adventure in his own might, but by witchcraft.

Now while Balin was making ready to depart, there came riding to the court a lady named the Lady of the Lake, the same who had given King Arthur the sword Excalibur. She came on horseback, richly dressed, and saluted the king, and then told him that she had come to claim a boon which he had promised her when she gave him the sword. "Ask what you will," said King Arthur, "and you shall have it if it lie in my power to give it to you."

"Well," said the Lady of the Lake, "I ask the head of that knight who hath won the sword, or else the damsel's head that brought it; and if I have both their heads I care not, for he slew my brother, a good and true knight; and that damsel was the cause of my father's death." Then was King Arthur deeply grieved, and he said, "Lady, I may not grant you either of their heads with honor, therefore ask what else you will and I will fulfil your desire." But the lady said, "I will ask none other thing of you."

As Balin was taking his leave of the court he saw the Lady of the Lake, and she was his worst enemy, for by her means his own mother had been slain. And when it was told him that she demanded his head of King Arthur, he was exceeding wroth, and

he went straight to her and said, "Evil be thou found! ye would have my head: and therefore shall ye lose your own." And with his sword he quickly smote off her head. Then the king was full of anger and cried, "Alas, for shame; why have ye done this deed? Ye have shamed me and all my court; for this was a lady that I was much beholden to, and she came hither under my safe conduct. I shall never forgive you for this trespass."

"Sir," said Balin, "I grieve for your displeasure; but this same lady was the untruest lady living; for by enchantment and sorcery she hath destroyed many good knights, and she was the cause that my mother was burnt, through her falsehood and treachery."

"Whatever cause you had," said Arthur, "you should have forborne her in my presence; therefore think not but that you shall repent it, for such a despite have I never had before in my court. Therefore, withdraw you from my court with all the haste you may."

Then Balin took up the head of the lady and bore it with him to his hostel; and there he met his squire who was sorry that his master had displeased King Arthur. And so they rode out of the town. "Alas," said the squire, "ye are greatly to blame to displease King Arthur." "As for that," replied Balin, "I will hie me with all the haste I may to meet King Rience, and to destroy him or else to

die therefore; and if it may happen me to win him, then will King Arthur be my good and gracious lord."

Then King Arthur and all his court made great dole, being deeply grieved at the death of the Lady of the Lake; and they buried her with great pomp.

CHAPTER II

HOW BALIN FOUGHT WITH SIR LANCEOR

NOW there was at that time at King Arthur's court, a knight named Lanceor, who was the son of a King of Ireland. This knight was very proud and counted himself one of the best knights of the court. He had a great spite against Balin for the achieving of the sword, being jealous that any one should be accounted of more prowess than himself. So he asked King Arthur if he would give him leave to ride after Balin, and to avenge the despite that he had done.

To this King Arthur quickly assented, saying, "Go, brave knight, and do your best, for I am right wroth with Balin; and I would that he were acquitted of the despite that he hath done to me and my court."

In the meantime came Merlin to Arthur's court; and there it was told him of the adventure of the sword and of the Lady of the Lake. Then Merlin said, "Let me tell you of this damsel that brought the sword unto your court; she is the falsest damsel that liveth."

"Say not so," they said, "for she hath a brother who is a passing good knight and a true man of great prowess; and this damsel loved another knight who held her in dishonor, and so her brother met him and slew him, and when the damsel knew that her lover was slain she went to the lady, Lily of Avalon, and besought her help to be avenged on her brother. And so this lady, Lily of Avalon, took her this sword, and told her that no man should draw it out of the scabbard unless he were one of the best knights of the realm; and that with this sword he should slay his brother."

Meanwhile Sir Lanceor armed himself and mounting his horse, took his spear in his hand and rode after Balin with all speed. As he came to the top of a hill he caught sight of Balin, and with a loud voice cried to him, saying, "Abide knight, for ye shall abide whether ye will or not and the shield you have before you shall not help you."

When Balin heard these words, he turned his horse fiercely and said, "Fair knight, what will you with me? will you joust with me?" "Yea," said Sir Lanceor, "therefore am I come after you." "Peradventure," said Balin, "it would have been better to have holden you at home, for many a man thinketh to put his enemy to a rebuke, and often he falleth to it himself. Or what court are ye from?"

"I am come from the court of King Arthur," said Sir Lanceor, "and am come hither to avenge the

despite that ye did this day to King Arthur and his court." "Well," said Balin, "I see well that I must have ado with you, though it grieveth me to do so since your quarrel is full simple; for the lady that is dead was an enemy to all good knights, or else I would have been as loth as any knight that liveth to slay a lady." "Make yourself ready," said the knight Sir Lanceor, "and meet me, for one of us shall abide in the field."

Then they took their spears in all haste, and came together as fast as their horses might drive. The spear of Lanceor smote Balin upon the shield so that it went all to shivers; while Balin smote Lanceor with such a might that his spear went through Lanceor's shield and pierced his body. Then Balin turned his horse quickly and drew his sword to smite the knight with it; but he saw that he had fallen from his horse and lay dead upon the ground.

Then he looked around him and saw a damsel that came riding on a palfrey as fast as her horse could gallop. When she espied that Sir Lanceor was slain, she wept sorely and said, "O Balin, two bodies hast thou slain, and one heart, for two hearts in one body, and two souls thou hast lost."

And therewith she took the sword from her lover who lay dead, and as she took it she fell to the ground in a swoon. And when she arose again she wept without measure, and her sorrow grieved Balin passing sore. And he went to her to take

the sword out of her hands; but she held it so fast that he could not without hurting her. Then before he was aware, she set the pommel of the sword upon the ground and, falling on it, ran herself through the body.

When Balin saw that she was dead, he was deeply grieved that so fair a damsel should have destroyed herself for the love of the knight. "Alas," he said, "I am sore at heart at the death of this knight for the love of this damsel for I see that there was much love between them." Then Balin turned his horse and looked toward the forest. And as he looked he saw his brother Balan riding toward him. And when they met they put off their helms and kissed each other, and wept for joy and pity. And Balan said, "I little thought to have met with you at this sudden adventure. But I am right glad of your deliverance out of your imprisonment, for a man told me in the castle of Four Stones that you were delivered, and that a man had seen you in King Arthur's court; and therefore I came hither into this country, for here I expected to find you."

Then Balin told his brother of his adventure with the sword, and of the death of the Lady of the Lake, and how King Arthur was displeased with him, and that he had sent this knight after him who lay dead before them. "And the death of the damsel," he said, "grieveth me sore." "And so it doth me,"

said Balan, "but ye must take the adventure as God doth ordain unto you."

"And I am heavy of heart," said Balin, "that my lord Arthur is displeased with me, for he is the most worshipful knight that reigneth now on earth; and his love I will get or else I will put my life in peril. The King Rience lieth at a siege at the castle of Terrabil, and thither will we go in haste, to prove our worship and prowess upon him." And Balan said, "It will be well for us to do so and we will help each other as brethren ought to do."

As they thus talked there came a dwarf from the city of Camelot, on horseback as fast as he could ride, and finding the dead bodies of the knight and the damsel, made a great dole, and tore his hair for sorrow. Seeing the two knights he said, "Which of you knights hath done this deed?"

"Wherefore askest thou it?" said Balin. "Because I would know," said the dwarf. Then said Balin, "It was I who slew this knight in my defence, for he came hither to fight with me, and either I must slay him or he me. But this damsel slew herself out of love for the knight, for which I sorely grieve; and for her sake I shall owe all women the better love and favor."

"Alas," said the dwarf, "thou hast done great damage to thyself, for this knight was one of the most valiant men that lived; and trust thou well that the kin of this knight will chase thee through

the world till they have slain thee." "As for that," said Balin, "I fear it not greatly; but I am right heavy of heart because I have displeased my sovereign lord, King Arthur, for the death of this knight."

While they thus talked together, King Mark of Cornwall came riding toward them; and when he saw the dead bodies of the knight and damsel and understood how they had been slain by one of the two knights, he made great sorrow for the true love that was between them; and said, "I will not depart hence until I have made a tomb for them."

So he pitched his pavilion there and sought through all the country to find a tomb for them. At length after many days they found in a church a tomb that was rich and fair, and there King Mark put them both in the earth, and placed the tomb above them, and wrote the names of them both on the tomb, and placed upon the tomb this inscription,—"HERE LIETH LANCEOR, A KING'S SON OF IRELAND, THAT AT HIS OWN REQUEST WAS SLAIN BY THE HANDS OF BALIN; AND HIS LADY COLOMBE, WHO SLEW HERSELF WITH HER LOVER'S SWORD FOR DOLE AND SORROW."

Meanwhile Merlin came to Balin and seeing what was done said, "Thou hast done thyself great hurt because thou didst not save this lady that slew herself, for you might have saved her if you would." "By the faith of my body," answered Balin, "I

could not, for she slew herself suddenly." And Merlin said, "Because of the death of that lady, thou shalt strike a stroke the most dolorous that ever man struck, except the stroke of our Lord; for thou shalt hurt the truest knight and the man of the most worship that now liveth; and through that stroke three kingdoms shall be in great poverty, misery, and wretchedness for twelve years; and the knight shall not be whole of that wound for many years."

Then Merlin took his leave of Balin; and Balin said, "If I knew that what thou sayest is true I would do such a perilous deed as that I would slay myself to make thee a liar." As he thus spoke Merlin suddenly vanished from their sight. And then Balin and his brother took their leave of King Mark. But as they were about to go the king said, "Tell me your name." "Sir," said Balan, you see that this knight beareth two swords, therefore ye may call him the knight of the two swords."

And so King Mark departed and rode to Camelot to King Arthur; and Balin and his brother Balan rode away to King Rience. Now as they rode they met with Merlin disguised so that they did not know him. And Merlin said to them, "Whither ride ye?" "We have little to do for to tell ye," said the two knights. And Balin said, "But what is thy name?" To which Merlin replied, "I will not tell thee at this time."

"It is well seen," said the two knights, "that thou art not a true man, since thou wilt not tell thy name." "Be that as it may," said Merlin, "but I can tell you wherefore ye ride this way; for to meet King Rience; but it will not avail you unless you have my counsel."

"Ah," said Balin, "you are Merlin, we will be ruled by your counsel." "Come on, then," said Merlin; "you shall have great worship; but look that you act knightly, for you shall have great need." "As for that," said Balin, "fear you not, for we will do what we may."

Then Merlin lodged them in a wood among leaves beside the highway, and took off the bridles of their horses, and put them to grass and had the knights lie down to rest until midnight. Then Merlin bade them rise and make ready, for the king was nigh them, having stolen away from his host with three score of his best knights, to visit a lady called the Lady de Vance. "Which is the king?" said Balin. "Abide," said Merlin; " for here is a straight way where you shall meet him." And therewith he showed Balin and his brother where the king rode.

Then Balin and his brother met King Rience, and smote him, wounding him sorely so that he fell to the ground. And then attacking his knights, they slew them on the right hand and on the left hand, slaying more than forty of his men, and the

rest fled. Then they went to King Rience and would have slain him if he had not yielded himself unto their grace.

Craving mercy from them, the king said, "Knights, full of prowess, slay me not, for by my life ye may win something, but by my death ye shall win nothing." To this the knights replied, "What you say is truth;" and so they raised him from the ground and placed him in a horse litter.

With that Merlin vanished again and came and told King Arthur how that his worst enemy had been taken and discomfited. "By whom?" said Arthur. "By two knights," said Merlin, "that would please your lordship; and to-morrow you shall know who they are." Soon after came the two knights, Balin and Balan his brother, and brought with them King Rience, and delivered him to the porters, and charged them with him; and then returned again at the break of day.

At the dawn King Arthur came to see King Rience and asked him saying, "Sir King, you are welcome here; but by what adventure came you hither?" "Sir," said King Rience, "I came hither by an hard adventure." "But who hath won you?" said King Arthur. "Sir," said King Rience, "I was brought hither by the knight with the two swords and his brother, who are two marvelous knights of great prowess." "I know them not," said Arthur, "but I am much beholden to them."

Then said Merlin, "I will tell you who they are; one of them is Balin, the knight who achieved the sword, and the other is his brother Balan than whom there liveth not a better in prowess and worthiness; and it shall be the greatest dole of him that ever was of knight, for Balin shall not long endure."

"Alas," said King Arthur, "that is a great pity; for I am much beholden unto him, and I have ill deserved this kindness unto me." "Nay," said Merlin, "he shall do much for you, and that shall you know ere it be long."

CHAPTER III

HOW BALIN SLEW THE INVISIBLE KNIGHT, GARLON

NOT long after these events already told, King Arthur was taken somewhat sick, and he pitched his pavilion in a meadow and there lay down on a pallet to sleep. Soon he heard a noise as of a horse approaching, and looking up he saw a knight coming toward him making great dole. Then Arthur said, "Abide, fair sir, and tell me wherefore thou makest this sorrow." The knight replied, "You cannot comfort me," and so passed on to the castle of Meliot.

And anon soon after came Balin, and when he saw King Arthur he alighted from his horse and came to the king on foot and saluted him. "Ye are right welcome," said the king, "for just now came riding this way a knight making a great noise, for what cause I cannot tell; wherefore I request that ye ride after him and bring him back to me, either by good will or by force."

"I will gladly do this for your lordship," said Balin. And so he rode after the knight and found

him in the forest with a damsel. And he said to the knight, "Sir knight, you must come with me unto King Arthur, for to tell him of your sorrow."

"That I will not do," said the knight, "for it will scathe me greatly, and do you no avail." But Balin answered him, "I pray you make ready, for ye must go with me, or else I must fight with you and bring you by force, and that I am loth to do." "Will ye be my warrant if I go with you," said the knight, "that no evil befall me?" "Yes," replied Balin, "or else I will die."

Then the knight made ready to go with Balin, leaving the damsel behind him in the forest. As they reached King Arthur's pavilion, there came some one invisible and smote the stranger knight through his body with a spear. "Alas," said the knight, "I am slain under your conduct and guard by a traitorous knight named Garlon. Take my horse, therefore, that is better than your own, and ride to the damsel, and follow the quest that I was in wherever she will lead you, and avenge my death when you may." "That will I do," said Balin, "on the honor of my knighthood." And he departed from the knight in great sorrow. And King Arthur buried the knight in a rich and costly tomb, and made mention upon it how there was slain Herleus le Berbeus by the treachery of the knight Garlon that goes about invisible.

Then Balin and the damsel rode into the forest,

and as they journeyed they met a worthy knight, named Sir Perin, who had been hunting. The knight asked Balin why he seemed so sorrowful; and when he heard the story he offered to ride with him, and so they journeyed on together. As they were riding past a hermitage, the false knight Garlon again came invisible and struck down Sir Perin even as he had slain Sir Herleus. "Alas," said the knight, "I am slain by this traitor knight that rideth invisible."

Then Balin and the hermit buried Sir Perin in a costly tomb; and after that Balin and the damsel continued their journey. At nightfall they came to a castle, and as the gates were open they went in with the intent to spend the night there. Balin went in first, and as soon as he had riden within the gate, the portcullis was suddenly dropped behind him. At the same time many men rushed out of an ambush and seized the damsel.

Now when Balin saw that he could not ride back to help the damsel, he dismounted from his horse and got upon the wall and leaped down into the ditch. Then he drew his sword and rushed upon the men that were about the damsel. But they were only squires and churls, and they would not fight, but said they were only observing the custom of the castle in seizing upon the damsel.

They then told him how their lady was sick with a disease and had been many years, and that she

might not be cured unless she had a silver dish full of blood taken from a clean maid and a king's daughter; and therefore the custom of the castle was that no maid was allowed to pass the castle without being bled.

"Well," said Balin, "she may give you as much of her blood as she will, but she shall not give more than that while I have life to defend her." And so the damsel by her own free will gave them a silver dish full of her blood; but it helped not the lady. And so they rested there all that night; and on the morrow they passed on their way.

Thus they rode three or four days and never met with an adventure. And by chance they were lodged with a man who was passing rich and well at ease. And as they were eating their supper Balin heard some one crying as if in pain. Then Balin said, "What noise is this I hear?"

"I will tell you," said his host. "I was but late at a jousting, and there I jousted twice with a knight who is brother to King Pellam, and twice I smote him down. Then he promised to requite me on my best friend, and so he wounded my son that cannot be healed till I have some of that knight's blood. And he always rideth invisible, and I know not his name."

"Ah," said Balin, "I know that knight, and his name is Garlon: he hath slain two knights of mine in the same manner; therefore I would rather meet

that knight than to have all the gold in the realm, for the despite he has done me." "Well," said his host, "I shall tell you: King Pellam of Listenise hath made a cry in all this country of a great feast that shall be held within twenty days, and no knight may come there unless he bring with him his wife or his sweetheart; and that knight, your enemy and mine you shall see this day."

"Then I promise you," said Balin, "a portion of his blood to heal your son withal." "We will go forward to-morrow," said his host. So on the morrow they rode all three toward Pellam; and had fifteen days' journey before they came thither. And that same day began the feast; and they alighted and stabled their horses and went into the castle. But Balin's host might not be let in because he had no lady with him.

Then Balin was well received and brought to a chamber and disarmed by the attendants; and they brought him rich robes to his pleasure. And they would have had him leave his sword; but Balin would not consent to that, for he said it was the custom in his country for a knight always to keep his sword at his side. So they gave him leave to wear his sword; and he went into the castle and was set among the knights of worship; and his lady was set before him. Soon Balin asked a knight if there was not a knight in this court whose name was Garlon. "Yonder he goeth," said the knight; "he

with the black face; and he is the most marvelous knight now living, for he goeth invisible and thus destroyeth many good knights."

Balin gazed at him for awhile thinking to himself what he should do. "If I slay him here I shall not escape, and if I leave him now peradventure I shall never meet him again at such a good time, and much harm he will do if he lives." As he thus mused, Garlon espied that Balin was gazing at him, and he came up and smote Balin in the face with the back of his hand, saying, "Knight, why beholdest thou me so? For shame! therefore eat thy meat, and do that for which thou camest hither."

"Thou sayest truth," said Balin, "for this is not the first despite that thou hast done me; and therefore I will do what I came for;" saying which he rose up quickly and smote him with his sword, cleaving his head to his shoulders. Then turning to his lady he said, "Give me the truncheon wherewith he slew your knight." And she gave the truncheon to him, and Balin smote him through the body with it, saying openly, "With that truncheon thou hast slain a good knight, and now it sticketh in thy body." And Balin called to him his host and said to him, "Now may ye filch blood enough for to heal your son withal."

Then all the knights rose up quickly from the table to set on Balin. And King Pellam, springing to his feet cried out fiercely, "Knight, why hast

thou slain my brother? Thou shalt die for this deed of treachery." "Well," said Balin, "then do it yourself." "Yes," said King Pellam, "there shall no man have to do with thee but myself, for the love I bear to my brother."

So saying King Pellam caught in his hand a grim weapon and smote eagerly at Balin; but Balin put his sword between his head and the stroke, but the mace shivered the sword into pieces in his hand. And when Balin saw he was weaponless, he ran into the chamber to seek a weapon, and so from chamber to chamber, and no weapon could he find; and always King Pellam following him. At last he entered a chamber that was marvelously well furnished, and a bed arranged with cloth of gold the richest that might be thought. By the bed was a table of pure gold standing on four silver pillars, and upon the table stood a marvelous spear, strangely wrought, as though it had been made for a mighty king.

When Balin saw the spear he seized it in his hand, and turned himself to face King Pellam who was following hard after him, and smote him with the spear, so that he fell down in a swoon as if he had been dead. And therewith the castle rocked and trembled as if a mighty earthquake had passed, and the walls were riven and fell in ruins. And Balin also fell amid the ruins, so that he could not stir hand or foot for three days.

And when three days had passed Merlin came hither and took up Balin out of the ruins and restored him and got him a good horse, for his own horse was dead; and then bade him to ride out of that country. "I would have my damsel," said Balin. But Merlin answered, "Lo, where she lieth dead."

As for King Pellam he lay many years, sore wounded, and was not healed until Sir Galahad healed him in the quest of the Sangreal; for in that place, it was said, was part of the blood of the Saviour, that Joseph of Arimathea brought into this land, and there himself lay in that rich bed in which Balin found the spear, and the spear with which Balin had wounded King Pellam was the same with which our Lord was wounded on the cross; and now Balin had struck the "dolorous stroke" of which Merlin had forewarned him.

Then was Balin's heart full of sorrow for the harm he had wrought, and he said to Merlin, "In this world we shall never meet again, for it seemeth to me that a sad fate is mine." Then he mounted his horse and rode through the fair countries and cities, and found the people dead on every side. And all that were alive cried, "O Balin, thou hast caused great damage in these countries; for the dolorous stroke thou gave King Pellam, three countries are destroyed; and doubt not but vengeance will fall on thee at last."

CHAPTER IV

HOW BALIN FOUGHT WITH HIS BROTHER BALAN

AND now as Balin rode within three days he came by a cross upon which was written in letters of gold, "It is not for a knight alone to ride toward this castle." Then looking up he saw an aged man with hoary locks coming toward him, who said, "Balin le Savage, thou passeth thy bounds this way; therefore turn again, and it will avail thee,"—and the aged man vanished away anon, and he heard a horn blow, as it had been for the death of a beast.

"That blast," said Balin, "is blown for me; for I am the prize, and yet I am not dead." And therewith he saw a hundred ladies and many knights that welcomed him with fair semblance, and made him passing good cheer, and led him into the castle; and there was dancing and minstrelsy, and all manner of joy.

Then the chief lady of the castle said, "Knight with two swords, ye must have ado with a knight hereby that keepeth an island; for there may no

man pass this way, but he must joust before he pass." "That is an unhappy custom," said Balin, "that a knight may not pass this way unless he joust." "Ye shall have ado but with one knight," said the lady.

Then Balin said, "Well, since I must, I am ready. But traveling men are often weary, and their horses also; but though my horse is weary my heart is not weary; but I should be little grieved if I were going to my death." At this a knight said to Balin, "Sir, methinketh that your shield is not good; I will lend you a better one if you will." And he gave Balin a shield with a strange device, and Balin left his own shield which bare his arms. And so he rode unto the island, and went with his horse into a great boat, and when he came to the other side he met a damsel and she said, "O knight Balin, why have you left your own shield; alas, ye have put yourself in great danger: for by your shield ye should have been known. It is a great pity of you as ever was of a knight, for of prowess and hardiness you have no fellow living."

To this Balin replied, "It repenteth me that ever I came within this country; but I may not turn now again for shame, and what adventure shall befall me, be it life or death, I will take the adventure that shall come."

So saying he looked at his armor and understood that he was well armed, and therewith blessed him-

THE.LADIES.
VIEW.THE.DOLO-
ROVS.STROKE.

self and mounted upon his horse. Then before him he saw a knight riding out of the castle and coming toward him. His horse was decked with red trappings and he himself wore the same color. And when this knight in red beheld Balin, he thought that it must be his brother Balin because of his two swords; but as he knew not his shield he thought that it could not be so. And the other knight was Balan, Balin's brother, and he knew it not.

So they couched their spears and came rushing together with all their might, and smote each other on their shields; but their spears and their course were so great that the shock bore down both horse and man, so that they both lay in a swoon. Now Balan was the first that rose on his feet and drew his sword and went toward Balin; and he also arose and went toward Balan. Then Balan struck Balin a fearful blow, and though he put up his shield the blow went through the shield and broke his helm. Then Balin smote his brother with that unhappy sword, and well nigh felled him to the earth; and so they fought there together until their breaths failed.

Then Balin looked up to the castle and saw the tower full of ladies who were watching the fight. So they went to battle again and wounded each other grievously; and then they breathed awhile to rest themselves; and then fought again until the place where they fought was red with blood. And

by this time they had wounded each other with seven great wounds so that the least of them might have been the death of the mightiest giant in the world. Then they went to battle again so marvelously that it was doubtful that one should tell of such a battle for the great blood-shedding that was done.

At last Balan, the younger brother, withdrew a little and lay down. Then said Balin le Savage, "What knight art thou? for until now I never found a knight that matched me." "My name," replied the other, "is Balan, brother to the good knight Balin." "Alas!" said Balin, "that ever I should see this day." And therewith he fell backward in a swoon.

Then Balan crept upon his hands and knees, and put off the helm of his brother, and did not know him by his visage, it was so hewn and bloody. But when Balin awoke he said, "O Balan, my brother, thou hast slain me, and I thee, wherefore all the wide world shall speak of us both."

"Alas!" said Balan, "that ever I saw this day, that through mishap I might not know you: for I espied well your two swords, but because you had another shield, I deemed you had been another knight."

"Alas!" said Balin, "all that was done by an unhappy knight in the castle, for he caused me to leave my own shield to the destruction of us both;

and if I might live I would destroy that castle for ill customs."

Then came the lady of the tower with four knights and six ladies and six yeomen, unto them; and there she heard how they made their lament to each other, saying, "We came both of one mother and so shall we lie both in one pit." So Balin prayed the lady of her gentleness, for his true service, that she would bury them both in that same place where the battle was fought. And she granted them their request, and weeping said, "It shall be done richly, and in the best manner."

"Now," said Balin, "when we are buried in one tomb, and the inscription made over us saying that two brothers slew each other, there will never good knight nor good man see a tomb, but they will pray for our souls." At this all the ladies and gentlemen wept for pity.

And anon Balan died, but Balin did not die until midnight. So they both were buried; and the lady had an inscription made of Balan, how he was there slain by his own brother; but she knew not Balin's name. On the morrow Merlin came and wrote Balin's name upon the tomb with letters of gold, saying, "Here lies Balin le Savage, that was the knight with the two swords, and he that smote the dolorous stroke."

And Merlin took the sword of Balin and took off the handle and set on it another handle. Then

Merlin asked a knight that stood near him to handle the sword, but he could not, at which Merlin laughed. "Why do ye laugh?" said the knight. "Because," replied Merlin, "there shall never a man handle that sword but the best knight in the world, and that shall be Sir Launcelot or else Sir Galahad, his son; and Launcelot with this sword shall slay the man in all the world which he loves best, and that shall be Gawaine." All this Merlin wrote upon the handle of the sword.

Then Merlin built to the island a bridge of steel and iron that was but half a foot wide, and ordained that no man should cross that bridge unless he were of virtuous life and free from treachery and from evil thoughts and deeds. Then Merlin took the sword of Balin and by magic skill fixed it in a block of marble, and set it afloat upon the stream in such a way that the sword stood always upright above the water. And for years this stone floated down the stream, for no man could take it from the water or draw the sword, until in time it came to Camelot where as we shall relate hereafter the sword was drawn by the best knight and the purest that ever lived.

Soon after this, Merlin came to King Arthur and told him of the dolorous stroke that Balin gave to King Pellam, and how Balin and Balan his brother had fought together the most marvelous battle that ever was heard of, and how they were both

buried in one tomb. "Alas," said King Arthur, "this is the greatest pity that ever I heard tell of two knights, for in the world I know not two knights such as these."

Thus endeth the tale of Balin and Balan, two brothers, born in Northumberland, and two as good knights as ever lived.

CHAPTER V

THE FATE OF MERLIN

MERLIN was the great enchanter who lived during the days of King Arthur. He was full of crafty wiles, but he always used them in favor of the king. He could change himself into many forms, at one time appearing as a dwarf, at other times as a damsel, a page, or even a greyhound or a stag. This power he often used to aid King Arthur in his designs, and at times he would use it for the diversion of the people of the court.

After the quests of Sir Gawaine, Sir Tor, and King Pellenore, and the death of Balin, Merlin began to be less active at court and spent his time in leisure and pleasure. At last he disappeared entirely, having yielded to the charms and wiles of a damsel that King Pellenore had brought to Camelot. The name of the damsel was Viviane, and she was one of the damsels of the Lake, and was also called the Lady of the Lake. She was fair of face, of shapely form, and graceful in all her motions; but she was full of wiles to win men and hold them

subject to her will. She was very fond of King Arthur, and had even tried to win his love away from Queen Guinevere; and now she began to try to win the favor of Merlin, the chief of enchanters.

So subtle was the spell of her charms that he gave her his trust and regard, so that he was only happy in her company, and followed her wherever she would go. On her part she sought to discover the secret of his power, and long she pleaded with him to disclose it to her. For a long time Merlin would not yield to her request, though she besought him with tender voice and soft caress and eyes all soft with tears. At times he seemed to doubt her truth and faith, and would have put her secretly away by subtle crafts; but with a subtler craft than his she made him swear that he would never try his enchantments upon her if she would give him her love.

And now it came to pass that she and Merlin went over the sea into the land of Benwick, and there they saw King Ban and his wife, the fair Elaine, and their young son Launcelot. At this time King Claudas had made war upon King Ban, and the queen made great sorrow for the deadly conflict fearing that the king might lose his lands and his crown. But Merlin said to her, "Be not heavy in your grief, for this same child, within this twenty years, shall revenge you on King Claudas, and do deeds of valor at which all Christendom

shall speak in praise. And this same child shall be the man of most worship in the world, and while his first name is Galahad, ye have since had him confirmed as Launcelot."

"That is truth," said the queen; "his first name was Galahad and now he is called Launcelot. But shall I live to see my son such a man of prowess?" "Yea, lady, on my peril ye shall see it, and live many winters thereafter." Thus Merlin foretold the noble deeds of Sir Launcelot du Lake, who became the most worshipful knight of all the world; and his mother, the fair Elaine, hid all these things in her heart and was comforted.

Soon after this, Merlin and his lady Viviane departed and came into the land of Cornwall. And by the way he showed her many wonders and how he wrought his deeds of magic. And ever his heart clave to her more and more, and she seemed to love him also in return; but her heart was often filled with doubts concerning him, and often she feared him because he was the son of a wicked spirit and practiced magic arts. Long she sought to know the secret of his powers of enchantment that she might rule him according to her will. At last she won his trust in full, and amidst a storm, as she was clinging to his neck in alarm, he told her all the secrets of his art, and how with subtle words and waving hands she could herself wield the spell of an enchantress.

MERLIN. AND
VIVIANE.

And now having the secret she thought how she might place him under a spell and thus have him under her complete control to do with him as she wished. So one day she spoke to him in fair but crafty words, saying, "Sir, I would that we should make a fair dwelling place and one suited to our minds, so contrived by art and cunning work, that it might never be undone, and that you and I should live there in joy and solace always."

"My lady," answered Merlin, "I will do this as you may desire." Then she said, "Sir, I would not have you do it, but you shall teach me, and I will do it, and then it will be more to my mind." "I grant you this also, fair Viviane," said Merlin.

Then he began to devise the plan, and the damsel put it all in writing. And when he had devised the whole, then the damsel was full of great joy, and showed him greater semblance of love than she had ever made before; and they sojourned happily together a long while. At length it fell out as they were going one day, hand in hand through the forest of Brécéliande, they came to a bush of white-thorn, which was laden with flowers. Being weary they seated themselves under the shade of this white-thorn, upon the grass, and Merlin laid his head upon the damsel's lap and fell asleep.

Then the damsel rose deftly without waking him, and began the enchantment which he himself

had taught her. She made a ring with her wimple around the bush, and around Merlin. Nine times she made the ring and nine times she made the enchantment; and then she went and sat down by him, and placed his head again upon her lap. And when he awoke and looked around him, it seemed to him that he was enclosed in the strongest tower in the world, and laid upon a fair bed.

Then he said to the damsel, "My lady, you have deceived me, unless you abide with me, for no one hath power to unmake this tower but you alone." Then she promised that she would be often there, and in this she kept her covenant with him, for though she feared him, she loved him for his subtle craft and power. But Merlin never went out of that tower in which his lady Viviane had enclosed him; but she entered and went out again when she listed.

From this time forth Merlin was never known to hold converse with any mortal but Viviane, except on one occasion. King Arthur, having for some time missed him from his court, sent several of his knights in search of him, and among the number, Sir Gawaine, who met with a very strange and doleful adventure while engaged in this quest. Happening to pass a damsel on the road and neglecting to salute her, she revenged herself for his rudeness by transforming him into a hideous dwarf. He was bewailing his fortune as he went through the

forest of Brécéliande, when suddenly he heard the voice of some one groaning on his right hand; and looking that way he could see nothing but a kind of smoke, which seemed like air, and through which he could not pass.

As he looked he heard a voice, it was the voice of Merlin, coming out of the smoke and telling him by what misadventure he was imprisoned there. "Ah, sir!" he added, "you will never see me more, and that grieves me, but I cannot remedy it; I shall never more speak to you, nor to any other person, save only the damsel Viviane. But do thou hasten to King Arthur, and charge him from me to undertake, without delay, the quests of the Sacred Grail. The knight is already born, and has received knighthood at his hands, who is destined to accomplish this quest."

And then he addressed words of comfort to Gawaine, assuring him that he should speedily be disenchanted; and predicting to him that he should find the king in Carduel, in Wales, on his return, and that all the other knights who had been on like quests would arrive there the same day as himself. And all this came to pass as Merlin had said.

But as for Merlin no one knows certainly what became of him. Some think that he still remains a prisoner in the forest. To him the long years and ages have been but as days. He lies

in a magic sleep; but the day will come when the strong enchantment that bound him will be broken, and he will come forth to behold the changes that have been wrought by more potent arts than his, and all the wonders of this later time.

THE BOOK OF MORGAN LE FAY

CHAPTER I

THE ENCHANTMENT OF MORGAN LE FAY

ONE day not long after Balin's death, King Arthur, with many of his knights, rode out from Camelot to hunt in the forest. And with him was King Urience, the husband of Morgan le Fay, and Sir Accalon who also loved the queen. Now these three, being the best mounted, rode away from the others in chase of a great hart and so hard they rode that their horses fell dead under them. Then they did not know what to do, for they were a great way from Camelot and in the midst of a thick wood.

"What shall we do?" said King Arthur. "We are far from any house or castle, and the night comes fast upon us." "Let us go forward on foot," said King Urience. "We shall surely meet with some place of shelter."

So they went forward on the track of the hart,

and soon came up to where it lay on the banks of a great water, while a hound had it by the throat and others were coming up in full bay. Then Arthur blew the death note and killed the hart. When this was done he looked up, and saw upon the water a little ship, all gilt, with sails of silk, coming straight towards them. Nearer it came until it touched the shore and ran up on the sand. Then King Arthur went to the bank and looked in the ship, but there was no living thing to be seen on board.

"Sirs," said the king, "this is a marvelous thing. But let us go into the ship and see what is therein." So they all three went on board and found it richly furnished with a fair cabin all hung with rich cloth of silk. And while they were gazing upon it, the ship suddenly left the land again, and went into the middle of the water. By this time it was dusk; but all at once there were a hundred torches about the sides of the ship that gave forth a great light.

Then suddenly twelve beautiful damsels appeared and saluted King Arthur on their knees, and calling him by name, bade him welcome, saying that he should have the best cheer they could give. They led the king and his two companions into the cabin where was a table richly appointed with all kinds of meats and viands. After supping at their leisure, for they were very hungry from the chase, they were conducted each to a sleeping chamber

that was richly arrayed. Here they were laid upon soft pallets, and being weary they were soon buried in slumber and slept marvelously well all night.

As they fell asleep they little dreamed that they had been lured into an enchanted ship, and that strange adventures awaited them all, and that deadly danger threatened the king. For a plot had been laid by Morgan le Fay who was a great enchantress, having learned the art from Merlin and was scarcely less skilled in magic arts than the great enchanter himself. She was sister to King Arthur on the mother's side; but she hated her brother and was ever watching a chance to injure or destroy him. While Merlin was living she could do the king no harm; but Merlin was now dead and could not protect him. Merlin had warned King Arthur that he should be careful to keep his sword and scabbard; and trusting his sister, he had placed them in her hands for safe keeping. How false she was to her trust and how she carried out her enchantment we shall now learn.

On the morrow when King Urience awoke, to his great surprise he found himself in Camelot in the chamber of his wife Morgan le Fay. How this could be, he understood not, for when he had fallen asleep he was full two days' journey from Camelot. As for Accalon, we shall tell later what became of him. As for Arthur, when he awoke he found him-

self in a dark prison, and heard all about him the groans and complaints of woeful knights.

Then said King Arthur, "Who are ye that thus complain?" And one of them answered, "We are twenty good knights that are here prisoners. Some of us have lain here seven years, and even more, and some for less time." Then Arthur asked them for what cause they were thus imprisoned, and the knights told him that the lord of the castle was a rich baron named Sir Damas, who was one of the falsest knights alive, full of treason, and an arrant coward. He had a younger brother, Sir Ontzlake, a good and honorable knight, and a man of great prowess. But Sir Damas, by means of his riches and his men at arms, had deprived Sir Ontzlake of much of his heritage, so that there was always a warfare between them. Sir Damas would never meet his brother in the field; though Ontzlake had offered to fight him or any knight he could find in his stead, to settle their dispute in that fashion. But Damas would not fight himself, and he was everywhere so hated that he could get no knight to undertake his quarrel. So he lay ever in wait with his servants, and laid hold by treachery of every knight that came into his hand to seek adventure, keeping them in prison until one of them should agree to fight Sir Ontzlake. And many good knights had died for hunger rather than fight for him, because he was so false

and full of treason, and many of them were so lean of hunger that they could hardly stand upon their feet.

"This is a woeful story," said King Arthur. "I despise treason as much as any of you, and yet it seems to me it would be better to undertake the battle even if it were in an unjust cause, rather than to lie hungering in prison."

As he sat there revolving the matter in his mind, there came a damsel to him and asked, "What cheer?" "I cannot tell," said King Arthur. "Well," she said, "if you will fight for my lord, you shall be delivered out of prison; but if you will not you shall not escape hence all your life long."

"This is a hard case," answered King Arthur. "But I would rather undertake the adventure than die in prison; so I will fight for thy lord, on condition that he will release all these knights as well as myself."

This the damsel promised, and she said also that he should have a horse and armor. When the king looked at her it seemed to him that he had seen her before, and he asked her if she had not been in King Arthur's court. She answered that she had never been there; but she spoke false, for she was one of the damsels of Morgan le Fay. She knew Arthur well enough, and had come to that place at her mistress' bidding to contrive that he should undertake the battle on behalf of Sir Damas.

The damsel then went to Sir Damas and told him how she had found a knight for him. So he sent for King Arthur, and when he came Damas saw that he was a strong man, well made, and knightly in his carriage, and so was well content to have him for his champion. Then Arthur said to Sir Damas that he would do battle for him to the uttermost on condition that all the prisoners should be released. So Damas brought the twenty knights out of the dark prison and gave them their liberty. And so they all waited to see the battle.

CHAPTER II

HOW KING ARTHUR FOUGHT WITH SIR ACCOLON

WHEN Sir Accolon, the knight who was in the ship with King Arthur, awoke from his sleep, he found himself lying by the side of a beautiful fountain. And there came out of the fountain a pipe of silver, and out of that pipe ran water high up in a marble basin. And when Sir Accolon saw this he crossed himself and said, "Jesus, save my lords, King Arthur and King Urience, for these damsels in this ship have betrayed us; they were devils and no women; and if I escape this misadventure I shall destroy those false damsels that use enchantments."

With this there came to him a dwarf with a great mouth and flat nose, and saluted Sir Accolon and said, "I have come from Queen Morgan le Fay who greets you well, and bids you be strong of heart, for you are to fight to-morrow morning early with a knight. Therefore I have brought you King Arthur's sword, Excalibur, and its scabbard; and Queen Morgan desires you, as you love her, to do

battle to the uttermost, as you promised her when she and you talked privately together."

"I understand you well," said Sir Accolon; "and now that I have the sword, I will make good what I promised." So he sent loving messages to Queen Morgan; and now he knew that the enchantment of the ship and the means whereby he had been transported to the side of the fountain, were of her contrivance. And now also by her means was Sir Accolon conducted to the manor of Sir Ontzlake, Damas's brother, where he had passing good cheer. Then Sir Damas sent unto his brother, Sir Ontzlake, and bade him make ready by to-morrow at the hour of prime, to be in the field to fight with a good knight. When this word came to Sir Ontzlake, he was passing heavy; for a little while before he had been wounded through both thighs with a spear. So Sir Ontzlake knew not what to do, for he was so badly hurt that he could not stand on his feet. But his guest, Sir Accolon, when he knew what the matter was, offered to fight in his stead, as Morgan le Fay had sent him word to do. Then Sir Ontzlake was very thankful, and sent word to Sir Damas that he would have a knight ready in the field by the hour of prime.

On the morrow King Arthur heard mass; and after that he armed himself and mounted his horse, and went to the place appointed for the battle, where was a great gathering of the gentlefolk

of the country. While Arthur was waiting, there came to him a damsel from Morgan le Fay and brought a sword and scabbard, like Excalibur and its scabbard, saying, "Morgan le Fay sends you here your sword for the great love she bears you." For this the king was thankful; never dreaming that both the sword and the scabbard were only counterfeit, and were brittle and false.

Then Sir Accolon came into the field and as both their vizors were down neither of the knights knew the other. So they rode together with such force that both were unhorsed; and then they drew their swords and fought on foot, giving each other many heavy strokes. While they were thus fighting, the damsel of the lake came into the field, she who had put Merlin in his magic prison. And she came hither for the love she bore to King Arthur, for she knew how Morgan le Fay had ordained that King Arthur should be slain that day, and she hoped to save his life.

As they fought, Sir Accolon wounded the king with almost every blow, and shed much blood; while he himself lost no blood at all, because he had the scabbard of Excalibur at his side. When King Arthur felt himself so wounded, and saw his own blood upon the ground, he was dismayed, for he began to understand that the sword which he had could not be his own, and it seemed to him that the other knight's sword was very like Ex-

calibur. But for all that he held himself full knightly, and defended himself so well that all the people there said that they had never seen a knight fight better.

At length with loss of blood, he grew so feeble that he withdrew a little to rest. But Sir Accolon was bold because he knew he had Excalibur; and he called out, "It is no time for me to suffer thee to rest." And therewith he came fiercely upon King Arthur, and King Arthur met him and smote him so mightily in the helm that he nearly fell to the earth. But with that stroke Arthur's sword broke at the cross, and left only the pommel and the handle in his hand. When King Arthur saw that, he feared that he must die, yet still he held his shield up before him and lost no ground and abated not in courage.

Now, Sir Accolon, when he saw that Arthur's sword was broken, said, "Knight, thou art weaponless and may no longer endure. I am full loth to slay thee, wherefore yield thee to me as recreant." "Nay," answered Arthur, "I may not yield, for I have sworn to do thee battle to the uttermost. Therefore I would rather die with honor than to live with shame; and if you slay me being weaponless, it will be to thy shame."

"For that I care not," answered Accolon; and then he came fiercely on, and struck Arthur a blow that well-nigh sent him to the earth. But the

king pressed against Accolon with his shield and smote him with the pommel in his hand so that he went three strides back. When the damsel of the lake beheld King Arthur, how full of prowess and worthiness he was, and the false treason that was wrought against him, she had great pity that so good a knight and so noble a man of worship should be slain. So at the next stroke of Sir Accolon, by the damsel's enchantment, the sword Excalibur slipped from his hand and fell to the earth; and Arthur leaped quickly to it and got it in his hand. And forthwith he saw clearly that it was in truth his good sword Excalibur. At this he cried, "Ah, my good sword, thou hast been too long from me, and much damage thou hast done me." Therewith he spied his scabbard hanging at Sir Accolon's side, and suddenly he sprang to him and snatched the scabbard and drew it from him with all his might.

"O knight," said King Arthur, "you have done me much hurt with this sword, but now I warrant you that ere we part I will reward you with it as you have rewarded me." Therewith he rushed upon Accolon with all his might, and pulled him to the earth, took off his helmet, and smote him with such a buffet on the head that the blood gushed out of his ears, nose, and mouth. "Now will I slay thee," said King Arthur. "Slay me you may," answered Accolon, "if it please you; for you are the

best knight that ever I met, and I see well that God is with you. But I promised to fight this battle to the uttermost, and so I cannot yield to you."

Then it seemed to King Arthur that he knew the knight, so he asked him his name. "Sir," answered Accolon, "I am of the court of King Arthur, and my name is Accolon of Gaul." At this King Arthur was sore troubled, for he remembered that Accolon was favored by his sister Morgan le Fay. "Oh, sir knight," he said, "I pray you tell me who gave you this sword?"

"Woe with this sword," said Sir Accolon, "for by it I have gotten my death." Then he confessed that the sword had been sent him by Morgan le Fay, with the intent that he should kill King Arthur with it; for Arthur is the man which she most hateth in the world; and she loveth me out of measure and I do her in return. And when by her crafts King Arthur was slain, she would compass the death of King Urience, her husband, so that I and she might be king and queen. But to kill King Arthur," he said, "I never could have had the heart to do."

When he made this confession, Accolon begged Arthur to tell him who he was. To this the king replied, "O Sir Accolon, now know you that I am King Arthur, to whom thou hast done great damage." When Accolon heard that he cried out, "O! my gracious lord, have mercy on me, for I

knew you not." "Sir Accolon," said King Arthur, "mercy shalt thou have, for I believe that thou didst not know me; but none the less thou hast plotted my death, and art therefore a traitor. Still I blame thee not so much as I do my sister Morgan le Fay; for she by false arts has made thee consent to her evil purposes. But I will be avenged on her, if I live, so that all Christendom shall hear of it, for I have honored her and trusted her more than even my own wife."

Then King Arthur called the keepers of the field to draw nigh, and Sir Accolon cried aloud unto them all and told them that the noble knight with whom he had done battle was none other than King Arthur, our most sovereign liege and lord, the man of the most prowess and worship in the world. Then all the people fell down upon their knees and begged King Arthur's mercy. "Mercy ye shall have," said King Arthur; "but you may see what adventures oftentimes befall to errant knights, and how I have fought with one of my own knights to my great damage and his own."

Then he ordered Sir Damas to give his brother, Sir Ontzlake, his rightful inheritance, and charged him, on penalty of death, to atone to the knights he had left in prison, for the harm he had done to them, and never more to meddle with knights errant that might come into his country. And Sir Ontzlake he charged to come to his court, because

he was a good knight, and promised him honor and achievement.

Then the king and Sir Accolon were removed to a rich abbey of nuns, a few miles away, where their wounds were dressed, and within a few days King Arthur was healed; but Sir Accolon had lost so much blood that he could not be recovered. When he was dead, Arthur bade six knights to bear his body to Morgan le Fay and charged them to say that the king sent him to her for a present, and that he had got back his sword Excalibur and the scabbard. So they departed with the body.

CHAPTER III

MORGAN LE FAY AND THE ENCHANTED MANTLE

IN the meantime, Morgan le Fay, believing that all her plans had well carried, thought that King Arthur was dead. So one day as she espied King Urience as he lay sleeping upon his couch, she called a damsel and bade her bring his sword that she might slay him. But the damsel said, "O madam, if ye slay my lord you can never escape." "Have you no care for that," said Morgan le Fay, "therefore hie you fast and fetch me the sword."

Then the damsel departed with a heavy heart, and finding Sir Ewaine sleeping in his chamber, she awakened him and bade him arise and hasten to his mother, "For she will slay the king, your father, as he lies sleeping on his bed, and hath sent me in all haste to bring her his sword for this purpose." "Well," said Ewaine, "go on your way and let me deal with the matter."

So the damsel went and brought the sword to her mistress with trembling hands, and the queen took the sword and went boldly to the bedside of

the king, and stood a moment thinking where she best might smite him. As she lifted up the sword to smite, Sir Ewaine rushed to her and caught her by the hand, and said, "Ah! fiend, what wilt thou do? If thou were not my mother, I would smite off thy head with this sword. Men say that Merlin was begotten by a devil; but I may say that I have an earthly fiend for a mother."

"O fair son Ewaine!" said Morgan le Fay, "have mercy upon me. I was tempted of the devil; wherefore I cry thee mercy, and promise that I will nevermore do so; so save my honor and discover me not." Then Sir Ewaine promised that he would not make the thing known; and his mother gave her word that she would be true to her promise.

Meantime there came tidings to Morgan le Fay that Accolon was dead, and that King Arthur had got back his sword and scabbard, at which she was full of grief and anger. But because she would not have it known, she made no show of grief, though she knew that when King Arthur came hither, nothing would save her life. So she asked leave of Queen Guinevere to return to her own country; but the queen told her she had better wait till King Arthur came home. But to deceive the queen she said that she had such hasty tidings that she could not tarry. So Queen Guinevere gave consent for her to depart.

MORGAN.LE.FAY.
ESSAYETH.
MAGIC.

So early in the morning she took her horse and rode away. As she and her attendants journeyed they came to the same abbey of nuns where King Arthur lay. And learning that he was there, she went into the abbey and asked where the king was. They told her that he was asleep in his chamber, having had but little rest for three nights; so she said she would go in and wake him herself. As she was his sister, and a queen, no one thought to say her nay; so she went into the chamber, intending to steal from him his sword Excalibur. She found the king asleep with his sword held tightly in his right hand. When she saw she could not get his sword without waking him, she was passing sorry. However, she took the scabbard, and went on her way.

When the king awoke and missed the scabbard he was very wroth, and still more so when he knew who had stolen it. So he and Sir Ontzlake armed themselves hastily, and rode after Queen Morgan, and after a while came in sight of her. When she saw King Arthur was pursuing her she rode as fast as she could; but he gained upon her, drawing nearer and nearer. Then seeing she could not escape him she went to the shore of a lake that was near by and threw the scabbard into it, saying, "Whatever may become of me, my brother shall not have the scabbard." After that she rode on again with her knights into a valley where were a

great many stones; and when she saw she would be overtaken, by her enchantments she turned herself and her knights into marble statues.

When King Arthur and Sir Ontzlake came up and saw the statues, they thought that the change had been wrought by the judgment of God. They could not find the scabbard for it was so heavy with gold and precious stones that it sank into the lake; and so they rode back to the abbey. As soon as they were gone, the queen turned herself and her knights back into flesh and blood, as they were before; and they went on their way to the country of Gore. Then she made her castles strong and garrisoned them, for she had great dread of King Arthur's wrath. But with a semblance of courage, she sent him word that while she could change herself and her men into likeness of stones, she had no cause to fear him.

When King Arthur had well rested himself at the abbey, he came to Camelot and found his queen and his barons right glad at his coming. And when he had told them of his strange adventures, they all marveled at the falseness of his sister Morgan le Fay, and many knights urged that she should be burned.

Meanwhile Morgan abated no whit of her hatred against the king, nor of her evil designs against him. She made pretense of great sorrow for her deeds, but with secret wiles and show of friendship she still sought the death of the king. She sent

a damsel to the court with a mantle, the richest that ever was seen in the world, for it was so covered with precious stones that there was not space enough to put on another. The damsel who bore it said to the king, "Your sister sends you this mantle, and desires that you shall take this gift of her; and in what she has offended you, she will amend it at your own pleasure."

When the king saw this mantle, he was much pleased with it; but he said little for he did not put much trust in his sister. While he was considering what he should say, there came to him the Lady Viviane, saying that she must speak with him in private. So the king gave her private audience, and then she said to the king that on no account should he put on the mantle, or let it be worn by any in his court, until it had been put on by the damsel who had brought it. "Well," said King Arthur, "this shall be done;" so he called the damsel to him, and bade her put on the mantle.

To this the damsel was opposed, saying, "Sir, it will not beseem me to wear a knight's garment." But Arthur said that she must wear it before it came on his back or that of any one who was there. So the king made her put on the mantle, much against her will. Then was seen a marvelous thing, for as soon as the mantle was clasped about her, flames shot forth, and straightway she fell down dead and was burned to ashes. Then King Arthur saw how great was the treason of his sister Morgan le Fay.

CHAPTER IV

THE MEETING WITH SIR MARHAUS

THEN was King Arthur exceeding wroth against his sister Morgan le Fay, and because he suspected that her son, Sir Ewaine, was aware of her plots, he banished him from court. But Sir Ewaine was not at fault, but ever held by his father and King Arthur, and hated his mother's treachery. When Sir Gawaine heard that his cousin was to be banished, he made ready to go with him, for he said, "Whoso banisheth my cousin, banisheth me also." So they both departed from the court.

When the people knew that Sir Gawaine was departed from the court, there was much sorrow among them all. And Sir Gaheris, the brother of Sir Gawaine, said, "Now we have lost two good knights for the love of one."

The two knights rode on until they came to a great forest, when they saw a tower in a valley. By the tower were two knights armed and on horseback; and a little distant from the tower were twelve damsels who kept going to and fro beneath a tree.

As Gawaine and Ewaine went nearer, they saw a white shield hanging on the tree, and that the damsels were throwing mire upon it to befoul it.

Then Sir Gawaine and Sir Ewaine went and saluted them, and asked them why they offered this despite to the shield. "Sirs," answered one of the damsels, "there is a knight in this country that weareth this white shield, and he is a passing good knight with his hands, but he hates all ladies and gentlewomen, and therefore do we defile his shield. His name is Sir Marhaus, and he is brother to the wife of King Anguisance of Ireland." "I know him well," said Sir Ewaine, "he is one of the best knights living." And Sir Gawaine said, "You are to blame, fair damsels, for he who hung the shield there may soon return and need to use it to match other knights who may attack him."

While they thus spoke, they saw Sir Marhaus riding toward them. Then all the damsels fled into the tower, and so frightened were they that some of them fell by the way. And one of the knights of the tower rode forth and put his spear in rest and cried aloud, "Sir Marhaus, defend yourself." Then they ran together and Sir Marhaus smote the knight so hard that he hurled him from his horse and broke his neck. Thereupon the other knight of the tower came on, and he was also soon smitten down horse and man stark dead.

When this was done, Sir Marhaus rode unto his shield and saw how it was despoiled, and said, "Of this despite I am partly avenged; but for her love who gave me this white shield, I shall wear it, and hang mine here instead." So he hung the shield about his neck, and then rode straightway to Sir Gawaine and Sir Ewaine, and asked them what they did there. They answered that they came from King Arthur's court to seek adventures.

"Well," said Sir Marhaus, "here am I ready to fulfill any adventure you may require of me;" and he rode back a little way to get space to run a course with them. Sir Ewaine did not wish that they should joust with Sir Marhaus; but Gawaine said that they should be shamed if they did not essay him. Then said Ewaine, "I shall meet him first, for I am weaker than you; and if he smite me down then perchance you may avenge me."

So these two knights came together, and Sir Marhaus smote down Sir Ewaine, horse and man, and hurt him in the left side. Then Sir Marhaus turned his horse and rode toward Sir Gawaine who met him fiercely; but when they came together Gawaine's spear broke, and Sir Marhaus overthrew him also. Then Sir Gawaine sprang lightly to his feet, and drew his sword, bidding Sir Marhaus alight, or he would slay his horse. Therewith Sir

Marhaus dismounted, and tied his horse to a tree; then he pulled out his sword, and they fought eagerly together, giving each other many sore strokes. And so it was that after nine o'clock Sir Gawaine's strength waxed stronger and by the hour of noon it was thrice increased. At this Sir Marhaus marveled; but being a knight of great prowess he withstood Sir Gawaine mightily. And when it was past noon and drawing toward even-time, Sir Gawaine's strength began to grow more feeble, till at last he could no longer endure.

"Sir knight," said Sir Marhaus, "I have well felt that you are a passing good knight, and a man of marvelous might as ever I have met. Our quarrel is not so great that it need be fought to the death, and I should be loth to do you hurt, for I perceive you are very feeble." "Ah, gentle knight," said Sir Gawaine, "you are more courteous than I." And therewith they took off their helms and kissed each other and swore to love each other as brethren. Then Sir Marhaus asked Sir Gawaine to lodge with him that night; and he took them both, Gawaine and his cousin, to a good lodging that he had near by.

As they rode Gawaine asked Sir Marhaus why, being so valiant a knight, he had no lady love but seemed to hate all damsels. Sir Marhaus replied that he did not hate all damsels, but only those of the tower, and such as they, for they were nothing

but witches and enchantresses. To all good ladies and gentlemen, he said, he owed his service as a knight ought to do.

In a little while they came to Sir Marhaus' dwelling, which was in a little priory, and there they alighted; and ladies and damsels came and took off their arms and looked at their hurts for they were all wounded. Here Gawaine and Ewaine lodged for a full week until their wounds were healed; and when Sir Marhaus knew that they were King Arthur's nephews, he made them all the cheer that lay in his power. When they were whole again, he said that he would ride with them through the forest; and so they rode for seven days till they came to a country that was called Arroy, a country which was always full of strange adventures. As they were riding along, they came to a valley in which was a fair fountain, at the side of which sat three damsels. One was three score years and wore a garland of gold about her head; the second was thirty years and she also wore a circlet of gold about her head; and the third was but fifteen years, and about her head was a garland of flowers. The knights saluted the three damsels and asked them why they sat at the fountain.

"We are here," said the eldest, "to show strange adventures to errant knights. As ye are seeking adventures, you must each choose one of us, and go forth by a separate way; and this day twelve-

month we will all meet here again to tell our adventures."

To this the knights assented; and Sir Ewaine, because he was the youngest, and the least experienced, chose the eldest damsel as she could be of most help to him. Sir Marhaus took the second damsel, as her age was the most fitting to his; so the youngest and fairest damsel was left to Sir Gawaine, with which he was well pleased. Then each damsel took her knight by the reins of his bridle, and brought them to the three ways, and there they made an oath to meet at the fountain that day twelvemonth if they were alive. And each knight set his lady behind him and departed, Sir Gawaine going toward the west, Sir Marhaus going south, and Sir Gawaine going north.

CHAPTER V

THE ADVENTURES OF GAWAINE AND HIS DAMSEL

AS Gawaine and his damsel rode along they came to a cross by the wayside, and while they were there a knight passed them, the fairest and comeliest they had ever seen, making great moan and sorrow. He saluted Gawaine with courtesy and wished him much worship; and Gawaine wished him the same in return, to which the knight replied that such was not for him, for only sorrow and shame could come to him.

Then as this doleful knight rode forward there came against him ten knights, one after another; and he smote them all down with one spear. When they were all ten on foot, they went to him and he stood stone still and suffered them to pull him off his horse, and bind him hand and foot and tie him under his horse's belly, and so lead him away.

"Surely," said Sir Gawaine, "this is a doleful sight to see a knight so badly treated. "Sir," said the damsel, "it would be to your worship and honor to help that dolorous knight, for he is one of the

best knights that ever I saw." "I would be glad to help him," said Sir Gawaine, "but it seems to me that he would not have my help." But the damsel said sharply, "It seems to me that you have no heart to help him;" and she was wroth at Sir Gawaine.

As they talked there came two knights armed at all points, one of whom cried out, "Sir Gawaine, knight of King Arthur, make thou ready to joust with me." So they ran together so mightily that both were overthrown. Then they drew their swords and fought hard together. In the meantime the other knight went to the damsel and asked her to leave Gawaine and abide with him, promising to be her true and faithful knight. To this the damsel listened and gave her word that she would go with him, saying she would not remain with Gawaine because he would not strive for the knight that was led away by the ten knights he had overthrown. So while Gawaine was fighting, the damsel went away with the other knight.

Gawaine and the strange knight fought together a long time, and at last they agreed together to leave off fighting; and the knight took Gawaine to his manor near by. As they went Gawaine asked what knight that was who smote down the ten knights, and then suffered himself to be bound hand and foot and so led away.

"Ah," said the other, "that is the best knight I

ever saw, and I do not believe there is a better in the world. His name is Sir Pelleas, and he loves a great lady in this country that is called Ettarde. He first beheld her at a tournament which was held in this place, at which were many ladies and five hundred knights. And he who proved the best knight was to have a passing good sword and a circlet of gold to give to the lady at the tournament whom he held to be the fairest. Sir Pelleas was by far the best knight that was there, for no man could withstand him, and each of the three days the tournament lasted he struck down more than twenty knights. So he won the prize, and forthwith he went to the lady Ettarde and laid the circlet at her feet and said openly that she was the fairest lady that was there and that he would prove it on any knight there who said him nay. So he chose her for his sovereign lady, and said he would never love any other but her. But she was very proud and made scorn of Sir Pelleas, and said she would never love him even though he would die for her. Wherefore all the ladies and gentlemen had scorn for her because she was so proud. But he followed her to her manor, saying he would never leave her till she loved him, and now he is lodged at a priory near by her. Every day she sends out knights to fight with him; and he always puts them to the worse, and then suffers them to take him prisoner and lead him to her unworthily, because in no

other way can he gain a sight of his lady-love. And all this she does to cause him to leave the country and to leave off loving her."

When Gawaine heard this he was full of pity for the knight Sir Pelleas, and said that the next day he would seek him and offer him what help he could. In the morning he took leave of his host, and sought Sir Pelleas, whom he found sorrowing in the forest. Then Sir Pelleas told Gawaine all the sad story of his love, saying he would rather die than not win her love, but lived hoping that he might win her love at last.

"And now," he said, "I pray thee that thou betray me not but help me to win my lady's love, for I may never come to her but by the help of some good knight. For she is in a strong castle here near by, and to see her I let the knights whom she sends to fight with me bind me and take me into her castle; but when I am brought before her she rebuketh me in the foulest manner and will not suffer me even to be her prisoner, but has her knights take me and my horse and let me out of the gates."

"Well," said Gawaine, "leave off your mourning and I promise you by the faith of my body that I will do all that lies in my power to get you the love of your lady." "Ah, my good friend," said Pelleas, "pray tell me who you are and how you hope to help me win my lady's love." Then Gawaine told him who he was, and that he would take Sir Pelleas'

horse and armor, and ride to the lady's castle, and tell her that he had slain her lover and thus gain access to her, and then do what he could to win her love for Pelleas.

So they changed horses and armor, and Gawaine rode to Ettarde's castle. At first she would not see him, but fled to the castle, thinking it was Sir Pelleas. But Gawaine called to her and stopped her, and when he told her that he had slain Sir Pelleas she received him right gladly, and the more so when he told her his name, and that he was the nephew of King Arthur. "It is a pity," she said, "that Pelleas was killed, for he was a good knight in his body; but I hated him more than any person living, and while he lived I could never have peace. But for that ye have slain him I shall be your love, and do anything that may please you;" and so she gave her love to Gawaine.

Now the lady Ettarde was exceedingly fair, and when Gawaine saw her he loved her sorely, so that he no longer heeded the oath he had sworn to Sir Pelleas, but wooed the lady for himself. So they lived together in a pavilion outside the castle, for Ettarde no longer feared Sir Pelleas, thinking he was dead. For three days and nights they stayed there; and then Sir Pelleas, who had been waiting for Gawaine at his lodging, could endure it no longer, but armed himself, and mounted his horse and rode to the castle. When he came to the

pavilion, he saw both Gawaine and the lady there asleep; and he guessed that Gawaine had betrayed him and forsworn himself, and his heart was like to burst with grief. "Alas," he said, "that ever knight should be found so false."

And then he took his horse and rode away as he could not abide the sight for sorrow. And when he had ridden half a mile or so, he turned again and thought to slay them both. But when he saw them lie so fast sleeping, he said, "Though he be never so false I will not slay him sleeping; for I never will destroy the high order of knighthood." And therewith he departed again; but when he had ridden half a mile he returned again determined to slay them. He drew his sword; but he could not bring himself to slay them sleeping, so he laid his naked sword across the lady's throat, and rode away making great sorrow. When Ettarde awoke and saw the naked sword at her throat, she knew it was Sir Pelleas's sword; and then she perceived that Gawaine had told her false. And she said, "Alas, ye have betrayed both me and Sir Pelleas, for you told me you had slain him and now I know well he is alive. And if Sir Pelleas had been as uncourteous with you as you have been to him, you would now be a dead knight." Sir Gawaine could say nothing in excuse, so he armed himself and rode away into the forest, well knowing that he had stained his knightly honor.

When Sir Pelleas came to his pavilions, he called his knights and squires and told them how he had been betrayed, and that he cared not now to live. "For your true and faithful service," he said, "I shall give you all my goods; for I will go unto my bed, and never rise again until I am dead; and when I am dead I charge you that you take the heart out of my body, and bear it unto her, between two silver dishes, and tell her how I saw her in the pavilion with the false knight, Sir Gawaine." Then Sir Pelleas went to his bed, making the greatest sorrow that ever was.

Soon after one of the damsels of the lake, named Nimue, met a knight of Sir Pelleas's in the forest and learned all that had passed, how his master had been betrayed through a knight and a lady, and how he would never rise out of his bed till he was dead. "Bring me to him," she said, "and I will heal him of his love so that he will not die; and I will place her in as evil a plight as he is now."

Then the knight brought the damsel to Sir Pelleas, and when she saw him she saw he was a likely knight, and she threw an enchantment upon him, and he fell asleep. Then she rode to the lady Ettarde, and charged that no man should waken Sir Pelleas till she came again. And so within two hours she brought the lady Ettarde thither, and found him still asleep; and as they stood looking at him the damsel of the lake cast such an enchant-

ment upon the lady Ettarde that she loved Sir Pelleas with all her heart.

And anon Sir Pelleas awoke and looked upon the lady Ettarde, and when he saw her he hated her more than any woman alive; and he said to her, "Go thy way, thou traitress, and come no more in my sight." At this Ettarde wept bitterly, and implored him for his love; but he would have nothing to do with her, but gave his love to Lady Nimue, who loved him faithfully in return; and they lived happily together all their lives.

CHAPTER VI

SIR MARHAUS AND EWAINE AND THEIR DAMSELS

WE will now return to Sir Marhaus who rode with the damsel of thirty years of age by a way that led to the south. The road they took led them into a deep forest, and when night fell they knew not where they were. At last they came to a small lodge in the wood and asked for shelter; but the man that dwelt there would not give them shelter at any price. At last he said, "If you will take the adventure of your lodging, I will bring you where you will be lodged."

"What adventure is it?" asked Sir Marhaus. "That you will know when you come to the place," answered the man. "Whatever it may be," said the knight, "do thou show us the place; for my lady and I and my horse are all weary, and rest we must have."

So the man went and opened the gate, and took them along a way until they came to a fair castle. He called the porter and bade him tell his lord that a knight-errant and fair damsel were waiting with-

out, and would be lodged with him. "Let them come in," answered the lord; "but it may happen that they will repent if they lodge in my castle." But Sir Marhaus was not afraid; and he and his damsel were led into a great hall where the lord of the castle was, with many goodly men about him.

Then the lord of the castle asked Sir Marhaus who he was and whence he came. "Sir," said Sir Marhaus, "I am a knight of King Arthur's, my name is Sir Marhaus, and I was born in Ireland." "That will be the worse for thee," answered the other grimly, "for I love not thy lord nor the company of the Round Table. Make what cheer thou canst to-night, for to-morrow thou wilt have to meet me and my six sons."

"Is there no other choice," asked Sir Marhaus, "but that I must have to do with you and your six sons at once?" "No," answered the lord; "and for this reason, that Sir Gawaine once slew seven of my sons in an encounter, and I vowed to have my revenge on any knight of King Arthur's that might come into my power."

Then Sir Marhaus asked him his name, and he said he was called the Duke of South Marches. "Ah," said Sir Marhaus, "I have heard of you ere this as a great foe to my lord King Arthur and to all his knights." "That you shall feel to-morrow," said the duke; "and now you will go to your cham-

ber." So they led Sir Marhaus to his chamber where he rested well for the night.

On the morrow the duke sent to Sir Marhaus that he should make himself ready for the fight. So the knight armed himself and rode out into the country around the castle where they should do battle. There were the duke and his six sons sitting on horseback all armed with spears. First the duke and two of his sons rode against Sir Marhaus shivering their spears against his shield; but he held up his spear and touched none of them. Then came the four sons of the duke against him; and they all broke their spears against his shield, while Sir Marhaus did not touch them.

Then Sir Marhaus ran to the duke and smote him so hard that horse and rider fell to the earth, and so he did to each of his sons. Then he alighted from his horse and went up to the duke and called on him to yield; but some of his sons began to recover and would have set upon Sir Marhaus. "Bid your sons stand back," said Sir Marhaus, "or I will do the uttermost to you all."

So when the duke saw that otherwise he could not escape death, he yielded and bade his sons to do the like. And they all kneeled down and put the pommel of their swords unto Sir Marhaus, and he received them. And Sir Marhaus bound them all never to be foes to King Arthur or his knights,

and at the feast of Pentecost to present themselves at the court and make submission to the king.

After that, Sir Marhaus departed, and two days afterward his damsel brought him to a place where a tournament was to be held. The prize for the best knight was a circlet of gold with a thousand byzants. And there Sir Marhaus did so nobly that he smote down forty knights; so the prize was awarded to him.

Then he and the damsel rode forth again, and after a long journey they reached the castle of a rich earl named Fergus. Near by there dwelt a giant, called Taulurd, who wrought much evil against the earl and wasted his lands; and Fergus made complaint of him to Sir Marhaus. "Sir," said Sir Marhaus, "does this giant fight on horseback or on foot?" "On foot," answered Earl Fergus, "for he is so large that no horse could bear him." "Well," said Sir Marhaus, "then I will fight him on foot."

So on the morrow he went forth to meet the giant; and soon he saw him sitting under a holly tree with many clubs of iron and battle axes about him. As soon as the giant saw Sir Marhaus he sprang to his feet and seized a club and rushed against him, and at the first blow crushed his shield to pieces. The knight was now in great danger, for the giant was both strong and a wily fighter. At length, however, Sir Marhaus, with a well aimed

blow, smote off the giant's arm above the elbow. Then the giant fled and the knight after him; but he ran into a pool of water that was so deep the knight could not follow him. Then Sir Marhaus made the earl's men bring him some heavy stones, and with these he pelted the giant till he knocked him down in the water and drowned him. Sir Marhaus then went to the giant's castle where he found many knights and ladies whom he delivered out of prison; and also so much riches that he was a rich man ever afterward to the end of his life.

Then he returned to Earl Fergus, who not only thanked him, but would have given him half his land, but he would not take it. And here he dwelt for nigh half a year to recover from his wounds that he had received from the giant. When at last he was whole, he and his damsel set out again, and reached the fountain that was to be their trysting place on the appointed day.

Now turn we to Ewaine who had ridden westward with his damsel of three score years. She brought him first to a tournament that was held in a place near the marches of Wales. At this tournament Sir Ewaine smote down thirty knights so that he won the prize, which was a gerfalcon and a white steed with trappings of cloth and gold.

After that, his damsel brought him to a castle

of a great lady in that country, called the Lady of the Rock. Now there were two perilous knights that dwelt nigh the Lady of the Rock, named Sir Edward and Sir Hue of the Red Castle, and they had despoiled the lady of much of the lands. So she complained to Sir Ewaine; and he said, "Madam, they are much to blame, for they have done that which is against the high order of knighthood, and have broken the oaths which they have taken. But if you like I will speak to them and entreat them; and if they will not heed my words I will do battle with them in defence of your rights." To this the lady gave many thanks, saying, "If I cannot reward you for this, I pray God will do so."

So on the morrow the two knights were sent for that they should come hither to speak to the Lady of the Rock. And so they came; but when the lady saw there were so many, she would not suffer Ewaine to go out unto them, neither upon their surety or fair language, but made him speak to them out of a tower. But they cared nothing for what Sir Ewaine said, but declared that they would keep what they had. "Well," said Ewaine, "then I will fight with either of you, and prove upon his body that you do wrong this lady." "That we will not assent to," answered the two brothers, "for if we do battle, we will both fight with one knight at once; and if you can meet us both, and can con-

quer us, the lady shall have her lands again." To this Sir Ewaine agreed, and the battle was appointed for the next day.

On the morrow Sir Ewaine rose early and rode unto the plain without the gates where the two knights were awaiting him. And as they rode together with great might, the two knights broke their spears on Sir Ewaine without unhorsing him; but he smote down Sir Edward first and then spurring his horse rushed upon Sir Hue and overthrew him. Then he alighted from his horse and drew his sword and fought them hand to hand. They fought with great fierceness, the battle lasting full five hours in which they gave Sir Ewaine many serious wounds. At the last, Sir Ewaine smote Sir Edward so hard upon the helm that he clove his head to the collar bone. With that Sir Hue lost his courage and kneeled down and yielded himself to Sir Ewaine, who in a gentle manner received his sword, and then taking him by the hand led him into the castle.

Then the lady was restored to all her lands, and Sir Hue was sworn to make his submission to King Arthur at the next feast of the Pentecost. But Sir Ewaine was so sorely injured in the fight that he abode with the lady for nigh half a year, until he was whole again.

And now at the end of the twelvemonth it was for the three knights and their damsels to meet at

the fountain. On that day all the knights were there, and all the damsels, except that Sir Gawaine did not bring his damsel, nor could she say but little worship of him. So the knights bade farewell to their damsels, and rode again into the forest; and there they were met by messengers from King Arthur commanding them to return to the court. And so they came to Camelot; and the king was passing glad at their coming, and so was all the court. Then the king made them swear to tell them all their adventures; and so they did.

At the feast of the Pentecost came the Lady Nimue and brought with her Sir Pelleas; and at the tournament which King Arthur held, Sir Pelleas won the first prize, and Sir Marhaus the second; so they were both made knights of the Round Table in place of two who had been slain during the twelvemonth. King Arthur was right glad that he had two such good knights; but Sir Pelleas never after loved Sir Gawaine, and though he spared him for the king's sake, he often overthrew him at jousts and tournaments.

And Sir Pelleas was ever a knight of great worship; and was one of the four that achieved the Sangreal. And when Sir Launcelot came to be a knight of great prowess, the damsel of the lake, Lady Nimue, so contrived that Sir Pelleas never had to do with him, for she would not suffer him to be at any jousts or tournaments where Sir Launce-

lot was, unless it were to fight on the same side. But as for Sir Marhaus, many days thereafter he met with Sir Tristram on an island, and there they fought a great battle; but at last Sir Tristram slew him, as will be set forth in the story of Sir Tristram.

THE BOOK OF SIR GARETH

CHAPTER I

HOW BEAUMAINS BECAME A KNIGHT

KING ARTHUR upon a time commanded that the solemn feast of Pentecost should be held at a fair city and castle of his, named Kinkenadon, that was at the sea-side near the Welsh border. So all the knights of the Round Table assembled as the king had commanded. And about noon of the day of Pentecost, as the king and all his knights were going to their meat, there came into the hall two men dressed in rich attire, and between them there walked a young man leaning on their shoulders, tall and well made, with broad shoulders and a comely countenance, and the fairest and largest hands that ever man saw.

As King Arthur and his court saw him, a great silence fell upon them all; and as room was made for him, the young man raised himself to his full

height and without saying a word walked up on the high dais where sat King Arthur and Queen Guinevere, and standing there he said, "God bless thee, O king, and all thy fellowship, and in special the fellowship of the Round Table. For this cause am I come hither,—to pray that thou wilt give me three gifts, the which shall not be unreasonable, but such as may be worshipfully and honorably granted. And as for the first gift, I will ask it now, and the other two on this day twelve months."

"Now ask," said King Arthur, "and you shall have your request." "Then, sir," said the young man, "this is now my petition—that ye will give me meat and drink enough for these twelve months, and at that day I will ask my other two gifts."

"My fair son," said King Arthur, "ask better, I counsel thee, for this is but a simple asking, for my heart giveth me to thee greatly; for, if I be not in error thou art come of men of worship, and will prove thyself a worshipful knight."

"Sir," answered the knight, "let that be as it may. I have asked all that I will ask." "Well," said the king, "you shall have meat and drink enough; that I never refused to friend or foe. But what is thy name?" "That I cannot tell," he answered. "At this I greatly marvel," said the king, "that thou knowest not thy name; and yet thou art one of the goodliest young men that I ever saw."

Then King Arthur called up Sir Kay, the Sen-

eschal, and charged him to give the young man meat and drink of the best, and to treat him in all respects as if he were a lord's son. "There is little need to go to such cost for him," said Sir Kay, "for I dare undertake that he is a villain born, and will never be a good man. Had he come of gentle blood, he would have asked for horse and harness; but even so he is as he hath asked. Since he has no name, I will give him one, and that is Beaumains, because he hath such fair hands, and I will bring him into the kitchen, and there he shall have good meat and broth every day, so that at the end of twelve months he will be as fat as a pork hog."

Then the two squires that had brought the young man departed, and left him with Sir Kay, who scorned and mocked at him. At this Sir Gawaine was wroth; and so was Sir Launcelot, who bade Sir Kay to leave off his mocking, for, said he, "I dare lay my head that he will prove a man of great worship." "That cannot be," said Sir Kay, "else he would not have asked for bread and drink alone. Upon pain of my life he was brought up in some abbey where they have fallen short of sustenance; so he has come hither for it."

Then Sir Kay took him and gave him a place to eat at the bottom of the table among the squires and boys, and there he ate sadly. Afterward both Launcelot and Gawaine invited him to their cham-

bers, and offered him many things, but he refused them and would do nothing but as Sir Kay commanded. So he was put into the kitchen and lay every night as the boys of the kitchen did; and this he endured for the whole year, and never displeased any, but was always gentle and mild. But whenever there was jousting of the knights he would be there to see it if he could; and when there were sports for the servants of the court, he always took part, and none might cast the stone or the bar so far as he by full two yards. Then would Sir Kay say, "How like you my boy of the kitchen?"

So it passed till the feast of Pentecost, and at that time the king held at Caerleon one of his royal feasts; and when he and his knights went in to meat, there came in a damsel and saluted the king, and prayed him for succor.

"For whom?" asked the king. "What is the adventure?" "Sir," said she, "there is a lady of great worship who is besieged by a tyrant, so that she may not go out of her castle; and because it is so reported that here in your court are the noblest knights of the world, I am come to pray you for succor."

"What call you the lady?" asked the king; "where dwellest she, and what is his name that besieges her?" "Sir king," answered the damsel, "as for my lady's name, that I may not tell you at this time. But she hath high rank and great estate;

and the tyrant that besieges her and destroys her lands is called the Red Knight of the Red Lands."

"I know him not," said King Arthur. "Sir," said Gawaine, "I know him well. He is one of the most perilous knights in the world. It is said he has seven men's strength, and from him I once escaped very narrowly with my life."

"Fair damsel," said the king, "there are knights here that would willingly undertake to rescue your lady, but because you will not tell her name, nor where she dwelleth, none of my knights shall go with you by my will." "Then I must seek further," quoth the damsel.

But while she was making ready to depart, Beaumains came before the king and said, "Sir king, God thank you, I have been these twelve months in your kitchen, and have had my full sustenance; and now I will ask my two gifts that I spoke of before."

"Ask upon my peril," said the king. "Then, sir, these shall be my two gifts: first, that ye will grant me to have this adventure of the damsel." "Thou shalt have it," said the king; "I grant it to thee."

"And, secondly," said Beaumains, "that ye bid Sir Launcelot du Lake to make me a knight; for of him and no other will I be made a knight. And when I am gone, I pray you let him ride after me,

and make me a knight when I require him." "All this shall be done," said the king.

When the damsel saw the young man and knew where he had lived the past year, she said, "Fie on you, sir king! shall I have none but your kitchen-boy to undertake my adventure?" Then she was wroth and took her horse and departed. And with that there came a dwârf, who brought to Beaumains a noble horse and armor, and all that was fitting for a knight, and when he was armed there were few in the court so goodly to look upon as he. Then he came into the hall and took his leave of King Arthur and Sir Gawaine, and prayed Sir Launcelot to ride after him, and then he mounted his horse and rode after the damsel.

Now all the court marveled when they saw him mounted, though he had neither spear nor shield. And Sir Kay took his horse and spear and rode after him. And as Beaumains overtook the damsel, Sir Kay rode up and cried aloud, "What, Sir Beaumains, know you not me?" Then Beaumains turned his horse, and saw that it was Sir Kay, and said, "Yea, I know you for an ungentle knight of the court, and therefore beware of me."

Thereupon Sir Kay put his spear in rest and ran upon him. But Beaumains turned aside the spear with his sword, and smote Sir Kay so hard on the side that he fell as though he had been dead. Then Beaumains alighted and took Sir Kay's spear and

shield; and then got on his horse again, and continued on his way, bidding his dwarf ride Sir Kay's horse.

Meanwhile Sir Launcelot rode up to Beaumains and offered to joust with him. So they made ready and ran together so mightily that both were borne to the earth and much bruised. When they rose Beaumains put his shield before him, and asked Sir Launcelot to fight with him on foot; and this they did for well nigh an hour. Sir Launcelot found Beaumains so strong that he marveled, for he fought more like a giant than a man.

Then Launcelot began to dread lest he should be shamed; so he said, "Beaumains, fight not so sore; your quarrel and mine is not so great but we may leave off." "That is true," said Beaumains, "but it doth me good to feel your might; and yet, my lord, I have not shown the uttermost."

Then he asked Sir Launcelot to give him the order of knighthood. "You must first tell me your name," said Launcelot, "and of what kin you were born." "Sir, if you will not disclose it to others I will tell you," said Beaumains. This Sir Launcelot promised; and then Beaumains disclosed that his name was Gareth, and that he was the youngest son of King Lot and brother to Gawaine. Of this Sir Launcelot was right glad, and so he made him a knight.

Then Beaumains departed with the damsel, and

Sir Launcelot came back to Sir Kay, and had him borne back to Caerleon on a shield. He was long disabled with his wound, and scarce escaped with his life; and all men scorned him, because he had been overthrown by a young man whom he had so mocked.

CHAPTER II

BEAUMAINS'S ADVENTURE FOR THE DAMSEL

THEN Beaumains rode on and overtook the damsel, but she gave him nothing but hard words. "What do you here?" she said. "You smell of the kitchen; your clothes are defiled with grease and tallow which you got in King Arthur's scullery. Think you I hold you any better for what you did to that knight? Not so, for you overthrew him unhappily and cowardly. Therefore, prithee, return, poor kitchen knave. I know thee well, for Sir Kay named thee Beaumains. What art thou but a turner of spits and a washer of dishes!"

"Damsel," said Sir Beaumains, "say to me what you choose, I shall not go from you whatever you may say; for King Arthur has given me your adventure, and I will fulfill it to the end, or else die in it."

"Thou finish my adventure!" she said. "Talk not of it; for thou wilt be met presently by one of such sort that, for all the broth thou hast ever

supped, thou wouldst not look him in the face." "That shall be seen," said Beaumains.

So as they thus rode through the wood there came a man on horseback, fleeing in great fear. "What is the matter?" asked Beaumains. "O knight help me!" cried the other. "For near by in a glade are six thieves who have taken my lord and bound him, and I fear they will slay him." "Bring me thither," said Beaumains.

And so they rode together until they came to where the thieves were with the knight bound. And Beaumains rode upon them, and with his first three strokes he slew three of them, and the other three fled. Then he rode after them and overtook them, and as they turned to defend themselves he slew them all; and then returned and unbound the knight. Then the knight thanked him greatly and begged him to come to his castle where he would give him rich rewards.

But Beaumains said, "Sir, I will have no rewards, for I must follow this damsel." But when he came near her she railed at him and bade him ride further off because he smelt of the kitchen. "And for all this deed that thou hast done," she said, "it but so happened to thee."

Then the knight whom Beaumains had released rode after the damsel and prayed her to lodge with him that night, and because it was nearly dark she rode with him to his castle where they had great

cheer. But when at supper the knight placed Beaumains afore the damsel, she reproached him for placing a common kitchen knave at the same table with a lady of high parentage. Then the knight was ashamed of her words, and he took Beaumains and sat down with him at another table.

On the morrow the damsel and Beaumains thanked the knight and rode forth again. Soon they came to a great river where there was but one ford, and on the further side were two knights that kept the passage. "What sayest thou?" said the damsel. "Wilt thou match yonder knights, or wilt thou return again." "Nay," said Beaumains, "I would not return again if there were six more."

So he rushed into the water and encountered one of the knights in the middle of the ford. The spears of both broke in their hands, at which they drew their swords and fought fiercely, till at last Beaumains smote the other so hard a blow upon the helm that he fell stunned into the water and was drowned. Then he spurred his horse to the land, where the other knight fell upon him and broke his spear also, and then they fought together with their swords, till Beaumains clove the knight's head to his shoulders. And when the damsel saw that, she crossed over the ford.

But the damsel said, "Alas, that ever a kitchen-boy should have the fortune to destroy two such doughty knights! Think not that thou hast done

well; for the first knight's horse stumbled, and he was drowned in the water, and not conquered by thy might; and as for the other knight it was by mishap that thou camest up behind him and slew him."

"Damsel," answered Sir Beaumains, "you may say what you will, but with whomsoever I have to do, I trust to God to match him ere we part. And as for your words, I care not so that I may win your lady." "Fie! fie! foul kitchen knave," she answered; "ere long thou shalt see a knight that will abate thy boast."

"Fair damsel," he replied, "give me fair words and all my care is past, for I care not what knight I may meet. But whatever you may say, I shall follow you wheresoever you may go."

So they rode together until even-song, and ever she chid him and scoffed him, and would not cease. So they came to a land that was all black, and there was a black hawthorn by the wayside on which hung a black banner, and by its side a black shield. Near by stood a black spear and a great black horse with silk trappings, and close at hand sat a knight, all armed in black harness, who was named the Knight of the Black Lands. When the damsel saw him she bade Beaumains flee down the valley, for his horse was not saddled. "I thank you," said Beaumains, "for ever you would make me a coward."

Then the black knight came to the damsel and said, "Fair lady, have you brought this knight from King Arthur's court to be your champion?" "Nay, sir," she answered, "this is but a kitchen knave that hath been fed in King Arthur's kitchen for alms."

"Wherefore cometh he in such array?" asked the knight. "It is a great shame that he beareth you company." "Sir, I cannot be delivered of him," said the damsel, "for he rideth with me against my will. I would that you put him from me or else slay him; for he is an unhappy knave, and hath done unhappily to-day through pure misadventure, for he hath slain two knights at the passage of the water."

"I wonder," said the black knight, "that any man of worship would have to do with him." "Sir, they know him not," she answered, "and because he rides with me, they think he is some knight of good blood."

"That may well be," said the black knight, "especially as he seems a full likely person, and worthy to be a strong man. But this much I will do for you, that I shall put him down on his feet, and his horse and his armor shall he leave with me, for it were a shame for me to do him any more harm."

When Sir Beaumains heard him say this to her, he said, "Sir knight, thou art full liberal of my horse and my armor: but I let thee know that it

cost thee naught; and this land I will ride through whether thou like it or not, and neither horse nor armor wilt thou get from me, except thou win it with thy hands."

"Say you so!" said the black knight, smiling. "Now yield thy lady to me without more words, for it beseems not a kitchen knave to ride with such a lady." "Thou liest," said Beaumains. "I am a gentleman born, and of higher lineage than thou, and that will I prove upon thy body."

Then in great wrath they drew apart their horses, and ran together with a crash like thunder. The black knight's spear was broken in his hand, but Beaumains's spear thrust through the other's side and broke in upon his body. Nevertheless the black knight drew his sword and smote hard at Beaumains, hurting him sorely, and Sir Beaumains struck at him in return; but at last the black knight fell from his horse in a swoon and died forthwith.

When Sir Beaumains saw that the horse and armor were so much better than his own, he alighted and armed himself in the black knight's armor, and took his horse and then rode after the damsel. But still she gave him many reproaches, and said that he had slain the black knight through mischance; and she warned him that there was a knight near by who would give him full payment, and that he had better flee and make his escape.

But Beaumains answered that he would not leave her for all that she might say.

Then as they rode together they saw a knight riding by who was dressed in green, and his horse had green trappings. When he came nigh the damsel he said to her, "Is that my brother, the black knight, that you have with you?" "Nay," the damsel answered, "this is an unhappy kitchen knave that hath slain your brother by mischance."

"Alas!" said the green knight, "it is a pity that so noble a knight should be slain by a knave's hand." Then turning to Beaumains he said, "Ah, traitor! thou shalt die for slaying my brother." "I defy thee," answered Beaumains; "for I let thee know that I slew thy brother knightly, and not shamefully."

Then the green knight blew upon a horn three deadly notes, upon which there came three damsels who quickly armed him with a green armor and gave him a green shield and a green spear. Then the two knights rode together furiously, and the spears of both broke in their hands. So they drew their swords and fought a full hard battle, and the green knight dealt Beaumains many sore strokes; but at the last, for all he could do, Beaumains got the better of him and struck him to the ground. So the green knight yielded to Beaumains, and prayed him to grant him his life.

"All this is vain," said Beaumains, "for thou shalt

die except my damsel pray me to spare thy life." And therewith he began to unlace his helm as though he would have slain him. "Fie upon thee, kitchen page," said the damsel; "I will never pray thee to spare his life, for I will never be so much in thy debt." "Then shall he die," quoth Beaumains.

"Alas!" said the green knight, "suffer me not to die when a fair word would save my life." Then turning to Beaumains he said, "O fair knight, do thou spare me and I will forgive thee the death of my brother, and ever will be thy man, and thirty knights of mine shall be at thy commandment." "Thou art mad," said the damsel, "to talk of a dirty kitchen knave having thirty knights at his service."

"Sir knight," said Beaumains, "nothing shall avail you unless my damsel speak with me for thy life;" at which he raised his sword as if to slay him. "Let be," said the damsel, "thou base scullion, slay not that knight, or else thou wilt repent it." "Damsel," said Beaumains, "your charge is to me a pleasure, and at your commandment I will spare his life."

Then the green knight knelt down and did homage to Beaumains, and after that he conducted them both to his castle, for by this time it was dark. But ever as before, the damsel would not suffer Beaumains to sit at the same table with her, so the

green knight sat with him at a side-table. "I marvel," said he to the damsel, "that you should rebuke this noble knight as you do, for I know no knight able to match him."

"It is a shame," she answered, "that you should say such worship of him." To which the knight replied, "Truly, it would be shameful for me to say any disworship of him, for he has proven himself a better knight than I am."

On the morrow they rose early, and after they had broken their fast, the green knight, with the thirty knights that served him, escorted them through a perilous forest; and at parting he said that he and his thirty knights would ever be at Sir Beaumains's command. So the knight and the damsel pursued their way; and still she chid him as sorely as ever, and bade him flee, for they were coming to a place where she said, "Were thou as mighty as Sir Launcelot thou shalt not pass thereby, a place that is called the Pass Perilous."

But of all this Beaumains took no heed except to say that he feared no dangers. And as they rode they came to a great tower with great battlements, as white as snow; and over its gate hung fifty shields of various colors. By the tower was a fair meadow on which were standing many pavilions, and thereabout were knights and squires, for on the morrow there was appointed to be a tournament at that castle. The lord of the castle

was called the Red Knight, because he went all in red.

As he looked out of the window, he saw Sir Beaumains as he rode with his damsel and his dwarf; and as he saw him he said, "With that knight will I joust, for I see that he is a knight-errant." So he armed himself hastily, and mounted his horse; and when he drew near Sir Beaumains and saw his black armor, he thought it was his brother the black knight, and said, "Brother, what do you in these marches?"

"Nay," said the damsel, "this is not your brother, but an unhappy kitchen knave that hath overcome your brother, and taken his horse and armor; and I saw him also overcome your other brother, the green knight. Now you may be avenged upon him, for I cannot get quit of him."

So without more words the two knights took their distance, and came together with such force that both their horses fell to the earth. Then they drew their swords and fought fiercely therewith for well nigh two hours. The damsel who stood by and watched them at last cried out, "Alas, thou noble red knight, think of what worship hath followed thee, and let not a kitchen knave endure before thee as this one doth." At this the red knight redoubled his strokes, hurting Beaumains so sore that his blood ran down to the ground; but Beaumains answered him so fiercely that in a little while

he smote him to the earth. As he drew his sword to slay him the red knight cried for mercy, saying, "Noble knight, slay me not, and I will yield the fifty knights that are at my command."

"All this will avail thee naught," said Beaumains, "unless my damsel pray me to save your life." And he made semblance to strike off his head. But the damsel said, "Let be, thou Beaumains, slay him not, for he is a noble knight."

Then Beaumains bade the knight stand up and thank the damsel for his life. Then the red knight took them to his castle and kept them over night where they had good cheer, except that the damsel still spoke many foul words to Sir Beaumains, whereof the red knight had great marvel. On the morrow before they departed the red knight came with his fifty knights to proffer homage to Sir Beaumains, who thanked him courteously, saying, "Grant me that when I call upon you, to come before my lord, King Arthur, and yield you unto him to be his knight." To this the red knight assented, saying, "I will be ready with all my fellowship at your command."

Then Beaumains and the damsel rode away, but still she chid him with unpleasant words, and Beaumains said to her, "Damsel, you are uncourteous to rebuke me as ye do. I have done you great service; and though ever you threaten me that I shall be beaten by the knights we meet, yet hither-

to they have all had to lie in the dust or mire. Therefore, I pray you, rebuke me no more unless you see me beaten or yielding recreant; then you may bid me go away from you in shame; but until then I tell you plainly I will not depart from you, for I should be worse than a fool were I to leave you while I win worship."

Then was the damsel somewhat abashed, but she said, "Well, right soon shalt thou meet with a knight that will pay thee all thy wages, for he is the man of the most worship in the world, except King Arthur." To this Beaumains replied, "The more worship he has, the more worship will it be to me to have to do with him."

In a little while they came in sight of a fair city, and between them and the city was a great meadow that was newly mown, wherein were many pavilions. The damsel told Beaumains that the lord of the city was a goodly knight called Sir Persuant of Ind, whose custom it was in fair weather to dwell in that meadow to joust and tourney, and that he had ever about him five hundred knights and gentlemen. The damsel would have had Beaumains avoid Sir Persuant, lest he should get some hurt; for they were now near the castle of the Red Knight of the Red Lands who had laid siege to her lady; and Sir Persuant, she said, though a strong knight, was as nothing to him. But Beaumains answered her fairly and softly that he should think it a shame

not to prove Sir Persuant, now that they had come so near him.

Then the damsel said, "I marvel what manner of man you are. You surely must be of noble blood, for more foully or shamefully did lady never rule or rebuke a knight than I have done to you, and yet you have borne it all patiently; and that came never but of gentle blood and lineage."

"Damsel," said Beaumains, "a knight is worth little that cannot endure a woman's tongue; but in truth the more you said the more you angered me, and I wreaked my wrath on those with whom I fought, so that all your hard words only aided me in my battles. As to my blood, though it is true that I had meat in King Arthur's kitchen, yet if I had willed I might have had meat elsewhere, and all I did there was but to prove my friends."

"Alas! fair Beaumains," she said, "forgive me all that I have missaid and misdone against you." To which Beaumains replied, "With all my heart, fair damsel, I forgive it you, for ye did nothing but as ye ought to do, for all your evil words pleased me; and since it liketh you to speak thus fair to me, know ye that it gladdens greatly my heart; and now it seemeth that there is no knight living but I am able for him."

While thus they spoke together, Sir Persuant of Ind had espied them, and he sent to inquire whether Beaumains came in war or in peace. "Say unto

thy lord," said Beaumains, "that I care not; it is as himself may choose."

When this answer was brought to Sir Persuant he said, "Then will I have ado with him to the uttermost." So he armed himself and rode toward Beaumains, who prepared himself to meet him. And as they rode together so great was the shock that their spears were broken and their horses fell dead to the earth. So they drew their swords and fought for more than two hours, and both were sorely wounded and their armor cut in many places; but at last Beaumains smote Sir Persuant on the helm so that he fell groveling to the ground, and then he leapt upon him and unlaced his helm to have slain him, when Sir Persuant yielded and cried for mercy. With that the damsel came and prayed Beaumains to save his life, which Beaumains readily granted, saying, "It were a pity that this noble knight should die."

And the knight said, "Thanks, gentle knight and damsel; and now I am sure that ye slew the black knight, my brother, Sir Percard, and conquered my other brothers, Sir Pertolepe, the green knight, and Sir Perimones, the red knight. And now you shall have my homage and fealty, and a hundred knights to be always at your command."

So they went to Sir Persuant's pavilion where they supped merrily together, and afterward retired to rest. And when they had broken their fast the

next day, Sir Persuant asked whither they were going. "Sir," said the damsel, "we are going to the siege of my sister at the Castle Dangerous."

"Ah!" said Sir Persuant, "there is the Red Knight of the Red Lands, who is the most perilous knight that I know, and a man that is without mercy, and it is said that he hath seven men's strength. He doth great wrong to the lady, and that is a pity, for she is one of the fairest in the world. If thou art her sister, is not thy name Lynette?"

"Yes," she said, "and my sister's name is Dame Lyones. And now, my lord," she continued, "I require of ye that ye will make this gentleman a knight or ever he fight with the Red Knight." To which Sir Persuant replied, "I will with all my heart, if it please him to take the order of knighthood from so simple a man as I am."

Then Beaumains, thanking him for his good will, told them that he had been made a knight by Sir Launcelot. "Ah," replied Sir Persuant, "of a more renowned knight you could not have become a knight; for of all the knights in the world he may be called the chief of all knighthood; and next to him are Sir Tristram de Lyones and Sir Lamorack de Galis."

"I too would fain have good honor of knighthood," said Sir Beaumains, "and if ye will not discover it I will tell you that I come of noble lineage;

for my name is Sir Gareth of Orkney, and King Lot was my father, and my mother was King Arthur's sister, and Sir Gawaine is my brother and Sir Agravaine and Sir Gaheris, and I am the youngest of them all, and yet neither King Arthur nor Sir Gawaine knoweth who I am."

CHAPTER III

HOW BEAUMAINS CONQUERED THE RED KNIGHT AND DELIVERED DAME LYONES

THEN the damsel sent word to Dame Lyones of her coming, by the dwarf, and how she brought with her a knight that had passed all perilous passages. "What manner of man is he?" said the lady, Dame Lyones. "He is a noble knight, truly, madam," said the dwarf, "and but a young man, but he is as likely a man as ever ye saw."

Then the dwarf told her that he was the king's son of Orkney, and was made knight by Sir Launcelot, and had slain the two knights at the ford, and the black knight, and had overthrown the green knight, the red knight, and the blue knight, which was Sir Persuant. This made her heart right glad, for she thought he must be one of the best knights in the world. So she sent rich food and wine to a hermitage that was near at hand, and a courteous message to Beaumains that he should be of good heart and good courage.

Then the damsel and Sir Beaumains took their

leave of Sir Persuant who sent a hackney coach to convey them on their way. And so in a little while they came unto the hermitage, and there they drank the wine and ate the venison and the baken fowls. And when they had rested, the dwarf returned again to the castle; and on the way he met the red knight who inquired whence he came and where he had been.

"Sir," said the dwarf, "I have been with my lady's sister of this castle, and she hath been to King Arthur's court, and has brought a knight with her." "Then I count her travel lost," answered the knight, "for though she had brought Sir Launcelot or Sir Gawaine or Sir Tristram, I would think myself good enough for them."

"It may well be," said the dwarf; "but this knight has passed all the perilous places and has slain all the knights that opposed him." "Then," said the red knight, "he must be one of those that I have named."

"He is none of those," answered the dwarf, "but he is a king's son." "What is his name?" inquired the knight. "That I will not tell you," said the dwarf; "but Sir Kay in scorn called him Beaumains." "I care not for him," said the red knight. "What knight soever he may be, I shall soon deal with him; and if I win him he shall have a shameful death, as many others have had." And so they parted.

That night Sir Beaumains and the damsel Lynette remained at the hermitage. The next morning they took their horses and rode through a forest, and came to a plain where they saw many pavilions and tents, and beyond them a great castle. As they came near, Beaumains saw that upon great trees to the right and to the left hung by the necks more than fifty knights, with their shields and swords fastened about them. Then Sir Beaumains abated his countenance and said, "What is this?"

"Fair sir," said Lynette, "do not be discouraged by this sight, all these knights came hither to this siege to rescue my sister; and when the Red Knight of the Red Lands had overcame them, he put them to a shameful death without mercy or pity, and in the same way he will serve you, unless you prove yourself the better knight."

"Jesu defend me," cried Beaumains, "from such a villainous death! Rather than that I should fare thus, I would be slain in the battle." "You need not trust in him," said the damsel, "for he hath no courtesy, but all that he overcomes are shamefully murdered. And that is a great pity, for he is a full likely man, and of great prowess and hath wide lands and possessions." "He may be a noble knight," said Beaumains, "but he useth shameful customs; and it is marvelous that none of the good knights of my lord King Arthur have dealt with him before now."

And as they rode, they came near the castle and saw that it was surrounded with many ditches and full strong walls, and the sea beat upon one side of the walls where lay many ships. Near by stood a tall sycamore tree, on which hung the greatest horn they ever saw, made of elephant's bone; and Lynette told Beaumains that if he would meet the red knight he must blow that horn. "But, sir, I pray thee, she said, "blow it not till noon; for it is now but prime, and it is said that his strength increases till at noon he has seven men's strength."

"Fie for shame, fair damsel," said Beaumains; "say no more as to that. If he was the best knight that ever was, I would meet him in his most might." So saying he spurred his horse to the sycamore and blew the horn so eagerly that all the place rang with noise. Then came knights from the tents and the pavilion to look, and they that were in the castle looked from the walls. As for the red knight, he armed himself hastily, and took a red spear in his hand, and rode out to a place where all that were in the castle and at the siege might see the battle.

"Sir," said Lynette to Beaumains, "now be merry, for yonder comes your deadly enemy; and there at yonder window is my sister, Dame Lyones." And she showed him where Dame Lyones was looking from a window in the castle.

"That is true," said Beaumains; "and she is the fairest lady that ever I looked upon. I ask no

better quarrel than now to do battle for her, for she shall be my lady, and for her will I fight." And as he looked at her the Lady Lyones made a courtesy to him, holding up both her hands.

With that came the Red Knight of the Red Lands, and called to Beaumains, saying, "Leave thy looking, sir knight, and behold me; for I warn thee that that is my lady, and for her have I done many strong battles." "If thou hast," said Sir Beaumains, "it seems to me it was but waste labor, for she loveth thee not. If I were advised that she was not glad of my coming, I would not do battle for her; but know thou well, Sir Knight, that now I love her, and will rescue her, or else die in the quarrel."

"Say you so," said the red knight; "methinks you ought to beware on account of the knights that you see hanging on yonder elms." "For shame," answered Beaumains, "that you should ever say or do such evil, in which you shame yourself and the order of knighthood. Think you that the sight of those hanged knights causeth me to fear? Truly, it is not so; that shameful sight causeth me to have more courage and hardihood against you." "Make you ready and talk no longer," said the Red Knight of the Red Lands, "and we shall decide which one shall have the lady."

With that they put their spears in their rests, and came together with all the might they had, and smote each other in the midddle of their shields, so

that their spears broke, and both fell to the ground, where they lay for some time stunned; and all that watched said the strange knight must be a noble jouster, for never before had the Red Knight of the Red Lands been so matched. Then they drew their swords, and rushed at each other like fierce lions, dealing great buffets, till they hewed large pieces from their shields and armor. And so they fought hour after hour, till it was past noon, and neither would stint; and then they rested for awhile. When they went to battle again, they fought more fiercely than ever, and dashed against each other so hard that they often both fell to the ground. Thus they endured till eventide, and none could tell which was likelier to win the battle.

Their armor was so hewn that in many places they were naked, but ever they defended those places. The red knight was a wily fighter, and his cunning taught Beaumains to be wise; but he bought his wisdom dearly. Then they agreed to rest again, and took off their helms to catch the cool air. When Beaumains's helm was off he looked up at the window and saw Dame Lyones, and she gave him such a look that his heart was light and joyful. So suddenly he started up and bade the red knight make ready. "I am full willing," said the red knight; so they got on their helms again and the stern combat began once more. But the red knight smote Beaumains on the arm,

so that his sword fell out of his hand, and then gave him such a buffet on his helm that he fell to the earth, and the red knight fell over him to hold him down. Then cried the damsel Lynette, "O Beaumains, where is thy courage? Alas! my sister beholds thee, and sobs and weeps so that it makes my heart heavy."

When Beaumains heard that, he rose with great might, and leaped lightly to his sword, caught it in his hand, and rushed upon the red knight, dealing blows so thick and fast as to smite the sword out of his hand. Then he hurled him to the ground, and unlaced his helm to slay him. Then the red knight yielded and cried for mercy; but Beaumains thought of the knights that had been so shamefully hanged, and answered, "I may not with worship spare thy life, because of the shameful deaths thou hast caused so many good knights to die."

"Sir," said the red knight, "hold your hand and you shall know why I put them to such a death." "Say on," said Beaumains. "Sir, I once loved a lady, and she had a brother slain. And she said it was by Sir Launcelot or Sir Gawaine, and she made me swear as I loved her, to labor daily in arms till I met one of them, and that all I overcame should be put to a villainous death; and this is the cause for my oath that I have put those good knights to death."

Now while he was speaking there came many

earls and barons and noble knights, and fell on their knees before Sir Beaumains, and prayed him to give the red knight his life, saying that it were better to take homage and fealty of him and hold his lands, than to slay him; saying also that they would become his men and do homage and fealty.

"Fair lords," said Beaumains, "I am full loth to slay this knight, for though he has done passing ill and shamefully, it was all at a lady's request, so he is the less to be blamed. For your sakes I will release him, and he shall have his life upon this covenant that he go within the castle and yield him there to the lady and ask her forgiveness, and make amends for all the trespass he has done upon her lands. And when that is done, he must go to the court of King Arthur, and crave pardon of Sir Launcelot du Lake and of Sir Gawaine for the ill-will he has borne against them."

"Sir," said the Red Knight of the Red Lands, "all this will I do as you command." Then he and all his barons did homage and fealty to Sir Beaumains. And after that the damsel Lynette, who was a right skilled leech, came and searched the wounds of both, applying healing ointment. For ten days they sojourned in their tents; and when their wounds were healed, the Red Knight of the Red Lands went into the castle and made his peace with Dame Lyones, making amends to her for all the wrong he had done her. After that he departed and rode

to King Arthur, where he craved the pardon of Sir Launcelot and Sir Gawaine, and told them how he had been overcome, and all of Sir Beaumains's battles.

And when King Arthur heard it, he said, "I marvel much of what blood he hath come for he is a passing good knight." "Have no marvel," said Launcelot, "for ye shall know that he is come of right noble blood; and as for his might, there are few knights now living that are as good as he."

"It would seem," said King Arthur, "by the way you speak that you know his name and of what kin he is." "That is true," said Sir Launcelot, "else I would not have given him the order of knighthood, but he gave at that time a charge that I should not disclose it till he required me, or till it were openly made known."

CHAPTER IV

BEAUMAINS AND THE LADY DAME LYONES

IN the meantime Beaumains, being whole of his wounds, greatly desired to see his lady, Dame Lyones; so he armed himself, took his spear, and rode to the castle; but when he came to the gate he found it shut. He marveled why they would not suffer him to enter; and as he looked up to the window he saw there the lady herself who said to him, "Go thy way, Sir Beaumains, for as yet thou shalt not wholly have my love till thou be called one of the number of worthy knights. Therefore go and labor worshipfully in arms these twelve months, and thou shalt then hear tidings."

"Alas, fair lady," said Beaumains, "I have not deserved that thou should show me this strangeness. I thought to have had good cheer with you, and sure am I that I have bought your love with part of the best blood in my body."

"Fair knight," answered Dame Lyones, "be not displeased nor over hasty, but believe me that what I have ordered is for the best. A twelvemonth

will soon be over, and I promise you that I will not betray you, but unto my death I shall love you and none other." And then she turned her from the window.

So Beaumains rode away from the castle very sad at heart, for his love for Dame Lyones was exceeding great. And he rode hither and thither without heeding where he went, and his dwarf followed him. And so it happened that he came to a poor man's house where he lodged that night; but he could get no rest for thinking of his lady. And on the morrow at noon being very sleepy he lay down on the grass with his head on his shield, bidding his dwarf watch his horse.

Now no sooner had he gone from the castle than Dame Lyones, who loved him no less than he did her, began to repent that she had sent him away; and the next morning she sent for her brother, Sir Gringamore, who was a good knight, and entreated him to follow Beaumains and watch an opportunity to get his dwarf from him. She asked him to carry the dwarf to his own castle, whither she and her sister would go, and then they might by questioning the dwarf learn who Beaumains really was.

Sir Gringamore to please his sister undertook to do what she desired. So he followed Beaumains, and came where he lay asleep, with the dwarf watching him. Then he crept up softly and seized the dwarf in his arms and rode away with him as

fast as he might into his castle. But as they went the dwarf cried out unto his master and begged him for help. At this Beaumains awoke and saw Gringamore, whose armor was all black, carrying away his dwarf. So he sprang up quickly, mounted his horse and followed as hard as he could; but he knew not the way, and so lost sight of the knight. At last riding through marshes and fields, he came to a fair green way, and there met a countryman, and asked him whether he had seen a knight in black armor bearing a dwarf in his arms.

"Sir," said the man, "there passed me a knight called Sir Gringamore with a dwarf that mourned and complained, and he went to his castle near by. But I counsel you not to follow him unless you owe him good will, for he is a very perilous knight." This counsel Beaumains heeded not, but rode toward the castle whither Gringamore had already come with the dwarf.

Now Dame Lyones and her sister questioned the dwarf so sharply that he told them his master was the son of King Lot and brother of Sir Gawaine, and that his name was Sir Gareth of Orkney. At this Dame Lyones was greatly rejoiced. And Lynette said, "Truly, madam, he may well be a king's son, for he is the most courteous and long-suffering man I ever met. And I dare say there never was a gentlewoman that reviled a man as I

reviled him; and at all times he gave me good and meek answers again."

As they thus sat talking, Sir Gareth came to the gate, with an angry countenance and his drawn sword in his hand; and he cried aloud, "Thou traitor, Sir Gringamore, give me my dwarf, or by the faith I owe to the order of knighthood, I shall do thee all the harm I can."

Then Sir Gringamore looked out of the window and said, "Sir Gareth of Orkney, cease thy boasting words, for thou gettest not thy dwarf again." "Thou coward knight," returned Sir Gareth, "bring him with thee and do battle with me, and win him if you can." "So will I do if I choose," answered Gringamore; "but for all thy angry words thou wilt not get him."

Then Dame Lyones said, "Ah, fair brother, I would he had his dwarf again, for I do not wish that he should be wroth. Know you that I love him before all others; and now I wish you would bring him here within that I may speak with him, but do not tell him who I am."

So Gringamore went down to Sir Gareth, and said, "Sir, I cry you mercy, and all that I have misdone against you I will amend at your pleasure. Therefore, I beg you to alight and take such cheer as I can give you in this castle."

"Shall I have my dwarf again?" said Sir Gareth. "Yea, sir, and all the pleasure I can make you, for

as soon as your dwarf told me who you were and what noble deeds you had done in these marches I repented of what I had done."

Then Sir Gareth alighted from his horse, and Gringamore took him by the hand and led him into the hall. And there came into the hall Dame Lyones, arrayed like a princess, and welcomed him right cheerfully and they had good cheer together. When Sir Gareth beheld her he said to himself, "Would that the lady of the Castle Perilous were as fair as she." And the more he looked at her and talked with her the more in love with her he became; and when they went to supper he could not eat but sat with his eyes upon her.

When Sir Gringamore saw this, he took his sister aside and told her of the knight's love for her and asked her whether she wished to marry Sir Gareth, saying that even if she were better than she was, her love would be well bestowed. And she answered that she loved him better than any man in the world, and that she was greatly beholden to him for what he had done for her, and that there was no one she would rather have for a husband.

So Sir Gringamore went to Sir Gareth and told him that his sister loved him even as he did her, and even better if better may be. And then he took him to his sister who received him with much affection and each had great joy in the other. And there she promised him her love, faithfully to love

him, and never any other, all the days of her life. Then she told him that she was the lady for whom he had done battle, the lady of the Castle Perilous; and how she had caused her brother to take away his dwarf that she might certainly know who he was. And she brought to him her sister, the damsel Lynette; and at this Sir Gareth was more glad than ever. And they were agreed to be married as soon as might be.

CHAPTER V

HOW SIR GARETH BECAME KNOWN

MEANWHILE the feast of Pentecost came round, and King Arthur held his court at Camelot. Then came the green knight with thirty knights, and they yielded themselves to the king; and also the red knight with fifty knights and Sir Persuant, the blue knight with a hundred knights. They all told King Arthur how they had been overcome by a knight that a damsel had with her whom she called Beaumains, and that they had come to court at his bidding. There also came the Red Knight of the Red Lands, who was named Sir Ironside, with five hundred knights. And all of these could never say enough in praise of the knight Beaumains and his might and gentleness. And Arthur said, "I marvel what knight this can be, and of what lineage he is come; he was with me a twelvemonth, and poorly and shamefully was he fostered, and Sir Kay in scorn called him Beaumains. But know you well, fair lords, that I shall do you honor for the love of Beaumains, and as

soon as ever I meet him I shall make you all, upon one day, knights of the Table Round."

Then the king and all his court went unto their meat; for there was a feast. And presently there entered the Queen of Orkney with a great number of knights and ladies. Then Sir Gawaine and Sir Agravaine and Gaheris, her sons, went to her and saluted her upon their knees, and asked her blessing, for they had not seen her for fifteen years. Then she said to her brother, King Arthur, "What have you done with my young son, Sir Gareth? He was here among you a twelvemonth, and ye made a kitchen knave of him which is a great shame to you all. Alas! what hath become of my dear son, who was my joy and my bliss?"

"Oh, dear mother," said Gawaine, "I knew him not." "Nor I," said the king, "which I sorely repent. For you did not tell me of his coming; and when he came to this court he came leaning upon two men's shoulders, as though he might not have gone. And he asked of me three gifts, all of which I granted him. But God be thanked, he has proved himself a worshipful knight as any now living for his years, and I shall not be glad till I find him."

"Sir," said the queen, "I sent him unto you well armed and horsed, with gold and silver in great plenty for to spend." "That may well be," said the king, "but thereof saw we none; save on the day

that he departed from us, when some knights told me that there came a dwarf hither suddenly and brought him armor and a good courser, at which we all had great marvel."

"Brother," said the queen, "all that you say I believe, for ever since he was grown he was marvelously witted; and ever was he faithful and true of his promise. But I marvel that Sir Kay did mock and scorn him, and give him the name of Beaumains; and yet the name does not unbefit him, for he is a fair handed man, and well disposed as any living."

"Then," said King Arthur, "let his name remain, and by the grace of God he shall be found if he is within these realms; and let us be of good cheer, for he is proved a man of worship, and that to me is great joy."

Then they counseled how they should find him, and Sir Launcelot advised that they send word unto Dame Lyones, praying her to come to court thinking that she could give the best counsel where to find him. So the messenger went in great haste, riding day and night, till he came to the Castle Perilous, and there he found her with her brother Sir Gringamore and Sir Gareth. When they learned that King Arthur had sent for her, at the advice of Sir Gareth, who did not wish her to reveal where he was, she sent word saying that she would come as soon as she might. When she came

she told the king she could not tell where Sir Gareth was, but advised that the king appoint a tournament at which it was quite certain they would hear of him. She also said that at this tournament the knight who proved the best should take her and her lands. So the king consented that a tournament should be held at the castle of Dame Lyones, where her knights should be against King Arthur's knights.

So great preparations were made for the tournament. Sir Gareth summoned to the castle Sir Ironside and Sir Persuant, and the green and red knights with their following. Also many other noble knights came to take part against King Arthur's; among whom were Sir Epinogrus, son of the King of Northumberland, Sir Palamides the Saracen, and his brothers Sir Safere and Sir Sagwarides, Sir Brian of the Isles, and Sir Grummore Gummursum, a good knight of Scotland. There came also Sir Tristram de Lyones—who by this time was reckoned the best knight of the world after Sir Launcelot, but was not yet a knight of the Round Table. With King Arthur there came to the tournament most of the knights of the Round Table. There were Sir Gawaine and his brethren Sir Agravaine and Sir Gaheris; Sir Tor, Sir Percivale de Galis and Sir Lamorack de Galis, sons of King Pellenore, and all of them, especially the last, passing good knights; Sir Launcelot with

all his kin; Sir Sagramore, Sir Dinadan, King Anguisance of Ireland, King Carodos of Scotland, King Urience of Gore, King Bagdemagus and his son Sir Meliaganus; and Sir Galahault the high prince, with other good knights whose names need not be given. And great provision was made in and about the castle for the lodging of all the knights.

Now Sir Gareth begged all the knights that were on his side that they should not make him known; and his lady, Dame Lyones, gave him a magical ring that had the virtue of changing the colors of him who wore it every time he chose, and also the knight who wore it could lose no blood. Of this ring Sir Gareth was very glad, because he could change his colors as he wished and that would prevent him from being known.

When the tournament began on the first day, there came from the castle Sir Epinogrus, and Sir Sagramore met him on King Arthur's part, and broke both their spears. Then Sir Palamides came out of the castle and encounterd Sir Gawaine, and both were overthrown. Then the knights on either side rescued their fellow knights and remounted them; and soon there was a great concourse of knights. Sir Aglovale and Sir Tor, knights of the Round Table, smote down Sir Brian and Sir Grummore. Sir Tristram, Sir Sadocke, and Sir Dinas, knights of the castle, encountered

Sir Bedivere, Sir Petipase, and Sir Ewaine, Sir Tristram overthrew Sir Bedivere, but Sir Sadocke and Sir Dinas had the worse. Then came in Sir Persuant of Ind; but with him met Sir Launcelot, and smote him down, horse and man. Sir Pertolope, the green knight, encountered Sir Lionel and smote him out of the saddle; and Sir Perimones, the red knight, ran against Sir Ector de Maris in such wise that both were unhorsed.

Then came in Sir Ironside and Sir Gareth from the castle, and against them were Sir Bors and Sir Bleoberis, cousins to Sir Launcelot. Sir Bors and Sir Ironside struck each other so hard that both their spears broke and their horses fell to the earth. Then Sir Gareth came riding in, and he overturned Sir Bleoberis, and with the same spear he smote down Sir Galihodin, Sir Galihud, Sir Dinadan, Sir Dodinus, and Sir Sagramore. Then many other knights came rushing on him, but he overthrew them all. When King Anguisance saw Sir Gareth do this, he marveled who it might be, for at every course Sir Gareth changed his colors, at one time being in green, at another in red, and at another in blue. Then King Anguisance encountered Sir Gareth, who smote him down, horse and man; and in the same wise he served King Carados, King Urience, King Bagdemagus and his son Sir Meliaganus.

Then Sir Galahault, the noble prince, cried out,

"Knight of many colors, well hast thou jousted; now make thee ready, that I may joust with thee." When Sir Gareth heard that he took a new spear, and the two ran together; and the prince broke his spear, but Sir Gareth smote him on the left side so that he reeled in his saddle, and would have fallen had not his men come round him and recovered him.

"So Heaven me help," said King Arthur, "that knight with the many colors is a good knight." Wherefore the king called unto him Sir Launcelot and prayed him to joust with that knight. But Sir Launcelot, who was ever courteous and noble, said that the knight had had travail enough for that day, and ought to have the honor. 'And though it lay in my power to put him from it," he said, "yet would I not do so."

Then there was a drawing of swords, and there began a great tournament in which Launcelot did many marvelous deeds of arms. And then between Sir Lamorack de Galis and Sir Ironside there was a strong battle, and also between Sir Palamides and Sir Bleoberis. And Sir Gawaine and Sir Tristram met together and Sir Gawaine had the worst of it, for Sir Tristram pulled him from off his horse. Then came in Sir Launcelot and fought with two strong knights at once, and so worshipfully that all men wondered at the nobleness of Sir Launcelot du Lake. Then came riding in Sir Ga-

reth, and rode up and put the two knights asunder, but would not strike a blow against Sir Launcelot; wherefore Sir Launcelot guessed that it was Sir Gareth. Soon after Sir Gareth met his brother Sir Gawaine, and rode against him and unhorsed him; and so he did to five or six other knights, so that all who beheld said that he did better than any. Then Sir Tristram, who had seen how well he had done, went to Sir Ironside and Sir Persuant and asked them who that knight was that went in so many different colors. So they told him who he was and how he became a knight and related all the great deeds that he had done when he rode with the damsel Lynette. "By my head," said Sir Tristram, "he is a good knight and a big man at arms; and if he be young, he will yet prove a full noble knight."

Then Sir Gareth rode out on one side to repair his helm; and as he drank some water he gave his dwarf his ring to hold. But when he was ready to resume the jousting he rode away and forgot to take his ring again; of which the dwarf was glad, because he desired that Sir Gareth should be known. So when Sir Gareth rode in the field again he went always in one color which was yellow; and King Arthur sent a herald to espy who he was. The herald went close to him and saw written around his helm, in letters of gold, "This is Sir Gareth of Orkney." So at King Arthur's com-

mand all the heralds cried aloud, "This is Sir Gareth of Orkney in the yellow arms."

When Sir Gareth saw that he was known, he was wroth and redoubled his strokes, and smote down Sir Sagramore and his brother Sir Gawaine. "O brother," said Sir Gawaine, "I thought not you would have stricken me." At that Sir Gareth rode one way and another till he got out of the press and came to his dwarf, and chiding him for keeping his ring took it from him, and thus could change his colors again, so that he should not be known.

Now Sir Gawaine saw where he had ridden and followed him, which when Sir Gareth espied he rode into the forest so that Gawaine knew not whither he had gone. Then by the advice of the dwarf, Gareth sent back the ring to Dame Lyones bidding the dwarf to tell her that he would come to her soon. Then he rode on into the forest where he met many perilous adventures and overthrew many noble knights. Now after three days he met an armed knight coming toward him whom he did not know. Then they rode together with all their might and each unhorsed the other, upon which they drew their swords and fought fiercely for more than two hours, and each hurt the other sore that the blood trailed to the ground. As they thus fought there came riding the damsel Lynette, and as she saw them she called out, "Sir Gawaine, Sir

Gawaine, leave fighting with thy brother Sir Gareth."

And when he heard her say so, he threw away his shield and his sword, and ran to Sir Gareth and took him in his arms, and after knelt down and asked him mercy. "Who are ye," said Sir Gareth, "that cry me mercy?" "O, Sir Gareth, I am your brother, Sir Gawaine, that for your sake have had great sorrow." Then Sir Gareth unlaced his helm, and knelt down to him and asked him mercy. Then they both arose and embraced each other in their arms, and wept awhile so that they could not speak; and each of them gave the prize of the battle to the other.

Then came the damsel Lynette to King Arthur, who was within two miles, and told him the tidings concerning Sir Gareth and Sir Gawaine. And immediately he mounted a palfrey and brought with him all the lords and ladies of his court to the place. And when King Arthur came near and saw Sir Gareth, the joy he felt cannot be told. Then also came the mother of Sir Gareth, who, when she saw her son, was so moved that she fell to the earth in a swoon and lay there a long time as if she were dead. Sir Launcelot was also overjoyed to see him; and there was no knight in all the world whom Sir Gareth loved as he did Sir Launcelot du Lake.

Then the king sent for Dame Lyones, and when

she came she was of all the ladies the fairest and peerless. And when Sir Gareth beheld her, there were many goodly looks and words between them that all men of worship had joy to behold them. Then King Arthur asked Sir Gareth whether he would like to have her for his wife, and Sir Gareth said, "My lord, know you well that I love her above all ladies living." Then turning to Dame Lyones, the king asked her what she had to say, to which she replied, "Know you, most noble king, that I would rather have Sir Gareth for my husband than any king or prince living, and if I cannot have him I promise you I never will have any one. He is my first love and my last, and if ye will suffer him to have his will and free choice I dare say that he will have me." "That is true," said Sir Gareth, "and if I cannot wed you as my wife, there shall never lady or gentlewoman rejoice me."

So the king gave his assent, and fixed the day of marriage at Michaelmas; and had it cried through all the country; and so Dame Lyones and Sir Gareth were married at Kinkenadon; and at the same time the damsel Lynette was married to his brother Sir Gaheris. Great was the splendor of the marriage, and there was great rejoicing. A three days' tournament was held in which there was much jousting by famous knights; but Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris did not joust, because they were newly married. On the first day Sir Lamorack de Galis over-

threw thirty knights, and won the prize, and on that day were Sir Persuant of Ind and his two brethren made knights of the Round Table. On the second day Sir Tristram overthrew forty knights and won the prize; and then was Sir Ironside made a knight of the Round Table. On the third day Sir Launcelot du Lake came in, and he overthrew fifty knights, so the prize was given to him. But the feast was kept up for forty days, because King Arthur was wishful to do honor to his nephew Sir Gareth.

And thus ends the story of the quest that was undertaken by Sir Gareth, who was always a good knight; for he was mighty in the field, and would do nothing that was shameful, and was always courteous and gentle to ladies.

THE BOOK OF SIR LAUNCELOT DU LAKE

CHAPTER I

SIR LAUNCELOT AND HIS FIRST ADVENTURE

SIR LAUNCELOT DU LAKE was the bravest and noblest of all the knights of the Round Table. He was the flower of chivalry, and the brightest ornament of King Arthur's court. His father was King Ban of Brittany, who was a friend of King Arthur and had given him right good help when he was fighting for his kingdom. Upon King Ban's return to Brittany, his enemy, King Claudas of Gaul, made war upon him, and having many knights he put King Ban to the worse and despoiled him of his territory. In hope to obtain the aid of King Arthur, he fled from his castle in the night, with his wife Elaine and his infant son Launcelot, leaving it in the hands of his seneschal, who immediately surrendered it to King Claudas.

As King Ban fled the flames from his burning castle reached his eyes and he fell to the earth with grief and died. Overcome with sorrow, his wife Elaine, leaving her child on the border of the lake, flew to receive the last sighs of her husband. When she returned she saw her son, the little Launcelot, in the arms of a damsel who, on the approach of the queen, threw herself into the lake and swam away with the child. The damsel was Viviane, the enchantress, who was known as the Lady of the Lake.

Thus Launcelot fell to the charge of Viviane, the Lady of the Lake, so that afterward he got the name of Launcelot du Lake. She lived in a fairy palace, in the midst of a splendid group of knights and damsels; and Launcelot dwelt there until he was eighteen years of age, learning all kinds of exercises befitting one who was to become a knight. At this age Viviane brought him to the court at Camelot to receive knighthood at the hands of King Arthur. He was already so strong and so skilled with the sword and spear that few knights could withstand him; and when he grew to his full prowess and manhood he passed all other knights that were ever in Arthur's court, or in the whole world, so that he was never put to the worse unless it was by treason or enchantment. King Arthur had great joy of Sir Launcelot; and Queen Guinevere held him in high favor above all other knights.

Sir Launcelot loved the queen above all other ladies, and for her he did many great deeds of arms, and often saved her from peril, through his noble chivalry.

For awhile Sir Launcelot amused himself with hunting and with jousting, but at last the time came when he thought to prove himself in some strange adventure. So he went to his cousin, Sir Lionel, and bade him make ready, for they two would seek adventures together. So they armed themselves and mounted their horses and set forth. At first they rode through a deep forest, and afterward they came to a great plain. The day was hot, and at noon Sir Launcelot became weary and had a strong desire to sleep. Then Sir Lionel espied a great apple tree that stood by a hedge and said, "Brother, yonder is a fair shadow, there may we rest ourselves and our horses." And so they alighted and tied their horses under the trees, and Sir Launcelot lay down under an apple tree, placing his helm under his head for a pillow, and soon fell into a deep slumber. And Sir Lionel watched while Sir Launcelot slept.

As he sat thus watching, he espied three knights riding as fast as they were able, and behind them followed a single knight in swift pursuit. As Sir Lionel looked upon him he thought he was the noblest looking knight he had ever seen. Soon the strong knight overtook one of the three knights

and smote him to the earth; and then riding forward did the same to each of the other knights. He then alighted from his horse, and bound the three knights fast with the bridles of their own horses, and led them away.

When Sir Lionel saw him do this, he made ready to essay the knight and thought to do it privily, so that Sir Launcelot would not awake and know it. So he sprang upon his horse and rode and overtook the strong knight, and bade him turn and fight him. At this the strong knight turned and rode upon Sir Lionel and smote him so hard that he bore both horse and man to the earth. He then bound Sir Lionel and threw him across his own horse, and did the same with all four of the knights, and then rode away with them to his own castle. When he came there he made them all unarm, and then beat them with naked thorns, and afterwards thrust them into a deep prison where there were many more knights whom he had treated in the same manner.

When Sir Ector de Maris knew that Sir Launcelot had passed out of the court to seek adventures, he was wroth with himself, and made ready to seek Sir Launcelot. So he rode away into a great forest, and when he had ridden a long time he met with a man who was a forester. And he said to him, "Fair fellow, knowest thou in this country any adventures that be here nigh at hand?"

"Sir," said the forester, "this country I know well, and I can promise you all and mayhap more than you want. Within a mile of here is a strong manor, and by that manor, on the left hand, there is a fair ford for horses to drink, and over that ford there groweth a fair tree, and thereon hangeth many fair shields, and at the bole of the tree hangeth a basin of copper and brass; and if you will strike thrice upon that basin with the butt of your spear, you shall hear tidings, or else you shall have the fairest grace that ever knight had who passed through this forest."

"Thanks," said Sir Ector; and he departed and came to the tree and saw many fair shields hanging thereon, and among them he knew the shield of his brother, Sir Lionel, and many more that were fellows of the Round Table. At this he was grieved to the heart, and he vowed to revenge his brother.

Then Sir Ector beat loudly on the basin, and then went and gave his horse drink at the ford. And soon there came a knight behind him and bade him come out of the water and make ready for a combat. At this Sir Ector turned his horse, and placed his spear in rest, and smote the other knight so great a blow that his horse turned twice around, but still he kept his saddle.

"This was well done," said the strong knight, "and full knightly thou hast stricken me;" and therewith he rushed his horse on Sir Ector and

HOW. FOVR. QVEENS
FOVND. LAVNCELOT
SLEEPING.

caught him under his right arm, and bare him clean out of his saddle, and so he rode away with him unto the hall of his castle, and threw him down into the middle of the floor. Now the name of this knight was Sir Turquine.

Then he said to Sir Ector, "Thou hast done to me this day more than any knight did these twelve years; and for this I will grant thee thy life if thou wilt swear to be my prisoner all the days of thy life." "Nay," said Sir Ector, "that will I never promise thee." "For that I am very sorry," said Sir Turquine. Then the strong knight took Sir Ector and unarmed him and beat him with sharp thorns, and after that put him down into a deep dungeon where he had placed the other knights.

Now when Sir Ector saw Sir Lionel he was very sorry, and said to him, "Alas, brother, where is my brother Sir Launcelot?" "Fair brother," replied Sir Lionel, "I left him fast asleep under an apple tree, and what is become of him I cannot tell you." "Alas," said all the knights, "unless Sir Launcelot help us we may never be delivered, for we know no other knight who is able to match our master, Sir Turquine."

Meanwhile Sir Launcelot lay sleeping under the apple tree. And about noon, King Arthur's sister, Morgan le Fay, and three other queens came riding by; and they saw the knight sleeping under the tree and knew him for Sir Launcelot. As they

looked upon him they saw that he was fair and comely, and they began to strive with one another as to which of them should have him for her knight. Then Morgan le Fay said that they should not strive for him, but that she would put an enchantment upon him so that he should sleep for six hours, and then bear him to her castle; and when he was within her hold she would take the enchantment from him and he should choose which one of them he would have for his lady love. So she cast the enchantment upon him, and then they laid him upon his shield and bare him on horseback between two knights and brought him to the Castle Chariot, and laid him in a cold and dreary chamber.

When evening came they sent unto him a fair damsel with his supper. By this time the enchantment had passed away; and when he saw the damsel he saluted her and she bade him good cheer. Then the damsel told him that he was in the power of an enchantress, but that if he would be of good courage she would aid him. "I will tell you more tomorrow, by the prime of day," she said. To this Sir Launcelot replied, "Thanks, fair damsel; it pleases me to have your good will." And so the maid departed; and Sir Launcelot lay there all night alone in the damp chamber.

On the morrow early came the four queens, all bidding him good morning, which he did them in return. Then Morgan le Fay said that he must

choose one of them for his own true love, and forget his lady, Queen Guinevere, or else remain in prison all his life. "This is a hard case," said Sir Launcelot, "that either I must die or else choose one of you; yet had I rather die in this prison than take one of you for my love."

At this they left him; but at noon the damsel came to him with his dinner, and asked him what cheer. "Truly, fair damsel," he replied, "in all my life I never was so full of grief." Then she told him that she would aid him to make his escape if he would give her a promise that he would go and help her father, King Bagdemagus, in a tournament that he and his knights were holding against the King of Northgalis. Some days before her father had been put to the worse at a tournament by three knights of King Arthur's court, and she wanted Sir Launcelot's help for her father. To this Sir Launcelot replied, "Fair maiden, I know your father well for a noble king and a good knight; and by the faith of my body, I shall be ready to do him and you good service at that day." "I thank you," said the damsel, "and to-morrow I will deliver you. So be ready betimes, and take your armor and your horse, your shield and spear; and repair to an abbey of white monks within ten miles of here; and there do you abide; and thither will I bring my father unto you." "All this shall be done," said Sir Launcelot, "as I am a true knight."

And so the damsel departed. And on the morrow she came early and brought him out of the prison, and took him where his armor had been placed. And when he was well armed and ready for battle, she brought him to his own horse; and lightly he saddled him, and took a great spear in his hand, and so rode forth. And as he left her he said, "Fair damsel, I shall not fail you by the grace of God."

So he rode all that day into a great forest, and in no wise could he find any highway, and the night fell upon him; and then he became aware, in a glade, of a pavilion of red silk. And he said, "By my faith, I will lodge in that pavilion this night." So he alighted from his horse and tied him to the pavilion, and then unarmed himself, and finding a rich bed he laid himself thereon and soon fell asleep.

Then within an hour there came the knight to whom the pavilion belonged, and he laid himself down beside Sir Launcelot. Now when Sir Launcelot felt him he started out of the bed and the other knight after him, and seizing their swords they fell upon each other, and Sir Launcelot wounded the knight sorely. Then Sir Launcelot asked the knight why he came into the pavilion, to which the knight replied that it belonged to him. At this Sir Launcelot was passing sorry that he had hurt the knight, and he took him into the pavilion

and staunched his blood. Then came the lady of the knight, and when she saw her lord Bellus thus sorely wounded, she cried out against Sir Launcelot and made a great sorrow. But the knight bade her not to cry as he had been wounded by a good knight in battle. Then the lady asked Sir Launcelot his name, at which he answered, "Fair lady, my name is Sir Launcelot of the Lake." "So I thought by your speech," said the lady, "for I have seen you oft and I know you better than you think. And now I ask, for the harm that ye have done to me and my lord, that when he cometh to Arthur's court that you will cause him to be made a knight of the Round Table, for he is a passing good man at arms and a lord of many lands." To this request Sir Launcelot gave a willing assent; and so as they talked the night passed.

Now when the day appeared, Sir Launcelot put on his armor and mounted his horse and took his leave, and the knight and his lady showed him the way toward the abbey, and thither he rode within the space of two hours. As Sir Launcelot came within the abbey yard, the daughter of King Bagdemagus heard the tramp of the horse upon the pavement. Then she arose and went to a window, and there she saw Sir Launcelot, and anon she bade the men to take his horse and lead him to the stable, while he himself was led into a fair chamber. And there he unarmed himself, and the lady sent

him a robe to wear; and anon she came herself, and made Sir Launcelot passing good cheer.

Then she sent in haste for her father, King Bagdemagus, who was within twelve miles of the abbey; and before evening he came with a fair number of knights with him. The king leaped quickly from his horse and went straight to Sir Launcelot's chamber, and taking him in his arms bade him good cheer. Then Sir Launcelot made his complaint to the king and told him how he was betrayed and how his brother Lionel had left him and he knew not where he was, and how his daughter had delivered him out of prison, and that while he lived he would do her service and all her friends and kindred.

"Then I am sure of your help at the tournament," said the king, "now on next Tuesday coming." "Yea, sir," said Sir Launcelot, "I shall not fail you, for so I have promised my lady, your daughter. The tournament, I hear, is to be within three miles of the abbey; so you will send me three knights of yours, such as ye trust, and see that they have white shields, and I also will have a white shield, and we four will come out of a little wood in the midst of both parties, and thus it shall not be known what knight I am."

So on the morrow the four knights placed themselves in ambush in a little wood close by the field where the tournament was to be held. Then the

King of Northgalis with his eight score helms came into the field on one side, and the King Bagdemagus with four score helms on the other side. At the signal they placed their spears in rest, and came together with a great rush, and there were slain in the first encounter twelve of King Bagdemagus's party and six of the King of Northgalis's party; and King Bagdemagus's party was set aback. With that came Sir Launcelot du Lake with the white shield and the three knights with him, and riding into the fray he smote down with his spear five knights, breaking the backs of four of them. Then he smote down the King of Northgalis and broke his thigh in the fall.

Now all this was seen by the three knights of King Arthur, and one of them, Sir Mador de la Porte, said, "Yonder is a shrewd guest; therefore I will have at him at once." So he rode against him, and Sir Launcelot bore him down horse and man, so that his shoulder was put out of joint in the fall. Then said Modred, "Now it is my turn, for Sir Mador hath had a sore fall." Sir Launcelot was aware of him, and met him with his spear in hand, and gave Sir Modred such a blow that the bow of his saddle broke and he flew over his horse's tail so that his helm went into the earth a foot or more and his neck was nigh broken. Then came on Sir Gahalatine with a spear, and Launcelot rode against him with all his strength so that both

their spears were shivered. Then they drew their swords and gave each other many a grim stroke, and at length Sir Launcelot smote Sir Gahalatine on the helm so hard that the blood burst forth from his mouth and ears. Therewith, his horse ran away with him, and he fell stunned to the earth.

Then Sir Launcelot got another spear and before it broke he ran down with it sixteen knights, some horse and man and some the man and not the horse. And then he got another spear and rode down twelve knights, and most of them never fought again. And then the knights of the King of Northgalis would joust no more, and so the prize was given to King Bagdemagus.

Then both parties departed for his own place, and Sir Launcelot rode forth with King Bagdemagus unto his castle, and there he had passing good cheer with the king and his daughter, and they offered him great gifts. And on the morrow he took his leave and told the king that he would go and seek his brother Lionel, who went from him while he slept. So he took his horse and commended them all to God. And as he departed he said to the king's daughter, "If ye have need at any time of my service, I pray you let me have knowledge, and I shall not fail you as I am a true knight."

CHAPTER II

SIR LAUNCELOT AND THE DAMSEL ON THE WHITE PALFREY

NOW as Sir Launcelot rode he came by chance into the same forest where he was taken sleeping. And in the midst of the highway he met a damsel riding on a white palfrey, and each saluted the other. "Fair damsel," said Sir Launcelot, "know ye any adventures in this country?" "Sir knight," replied the damsel, "here are adventures near at hand, if thou dost care to prove them."

"For that cause came I hither," said Sir Launcelot." "Well," said she, "thou seemest to be a good knight, and if thou darest meet with a good knight, I shall bring thee where is the best knight and the mightiest that ever thou didst find. But first I would know thy name, and what knight thou art." So he told her that he was Sir Launcelot du Lake.

Then she said, "Sir, there is an adventure here that well befits thee. Hard by dwells a knight, that has never yet been overcome by any man; and

his name is Sir Turquine. And I am told that he hath in his prison many of the knights of King Arthur's court which he hath won with his own hand. Now if you will have to do with him, and shall overcome him, I wish you to promise me, as ye are a true knight, to help me and other damsels that are daily distressed by a false knight."

Sir Launcelot promised as she desired, and so she brought him to the ford and to the tree where hung the basin. Sir Launcelot let his horse drink, and then he beat on the basin with the butt of his spear with all his might, so that the bottom fell out; and a long time he did so, yet he saw nothing. Then he rode along the gates of the castle nearly half an hour; and anon he saw a great knight coming, driving a horse before him, and on the horse lay an armed knight bound. And as he came near, Sir Launcelot saw that it was Sir Gaheris, Gawaine's brother, a knight of the Table Round.

Then Sir Launcelot rode out to meet him, and the great knight who was Sir Turquine, rode to meet Sir Launcelot; and Sir Launcelot said, "Fair knight, put that wounded knight off the horse and let him rest awhile, and let us two prove our strength. I am informed that you have done despite to many knights of the Round Table, therefore now defend thyself." "If thou art of the Table Round," said Sir Turquine, "then I defy thee and all thy fellowship."

Then Sir Launcelot and Sir Turquine put their spears in the rests, and came together with their horses as fast as they could run, and each smote the other in the midst of his shield so that both of their horses fell under them. Then as soon as they could get away from their horses, they drew their swords and took their shields and rushing together gave each other many strokes, so that soon both of them were covered with blood. Thus they fought for two hours or more, feinting and thrusting at each other whenever they could find an open place. At last they both were breathless and stood leaning upon their swords.

"Now, fellow," said Sir Turquine, "hold thy hand awhile and tell me what I shall ask thee." "Say on," said Sir Launcelot. Then Sir Turquine said, "Thou art the biggest man that I ever met before, and the best breathed, and much like one knight that I hate above all others. And if thou be not that knight and will tell me thy name, I will deliver all the prisoners I have, and we will be friends together while we live."

"That is well said," said Sir Launcelot, "but since I may have your friendship, I will ask what knight he is that thou hatest above all others?" "Truly," said Sir Turquine, "his name is Launcelot du Lake; and he slew my brother Sir Carados of the Dolorous Tower, one of the best knights then living, and therefore I have made a vow if

I ever meet him, one of us shall make an end of the other. And for Sir Launcelot's sake I have slain a hundred good knights, and many whom I have wounded have died in my prison; and yet I have in it three score and four; and all these shall be delivered, if thou tell me thy name, and thou art not Sir Launcelot."

"Now see I well," said Sir Launcelot, "that if I were one man I might have peace, and if I be another man there shall be mortal war between us; but now, sir knight, at thy request, I will tell thee that I am Sir Launcelot du Lake, knight of the Round Table. And now I defy thee to do thy best."

"Ah," said Sir Turquine, "Launcelot, thou art more welcome to me than ever was any knight before, for we shall never part until one of us be dead." Then they rushed together again as two wild bulls, feinting and thrusting with all their might, and fought for two hours and more, each giving the other many wounds, until the ground was all bepurpled with blood.

At last Sir Turquine waxed very faint from loss of blood, and drew somewhat back, and bore his shield full low for weariness. As soon as Sir Launcelot espied this, he leaped upon him fiercely as a lion, and caught him by the banner of his helmet, and dragged him down upon his knees, and then tearing off his helmet he smote him on the neck with his sword and cut off his head. And

when Sir Launcelot had done this, he went to the damsel and said to her, "Damsel, I am ready to go with you where you will have me, but I have no horse." "Fair knight," said the damsel, "take this wounded knight's horse, and send you him into this manor, and command him to go and deliver all the prisoners."

And so Sir Launcelot went unto Sir Gaheris, and prayed him not to be grieved for to lend him his horse. "Nay, fair lord," said Sir Gaheris, "I will that ye take my horse at your own command, for ye have saved both me and my horse, and this day I say that ye are the best knight in the world, for ye have slain the mightiest man and the best knight, except yourself, that ever I saw. And now I pray thee that thou tell me thy name."

"Sir, my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake; and I ought to help you for King Arthur's sake, and also for my lord Sir Gawaine's sake, your own dear brother. And when ye come within yonder manor, I am sure that you will find there many noble knights of the Round Table, for I have seen their shields hanging on yonder tree. Set them all free, and say to them that they shall abide there until I come, for by the high feast of Pentecost I think to be there, but at present I must ride with this damsel to keep my promise."

And so he departed from Sir Gaheris with his damsel. And Sir Gaheris went into the castle, and

there he found a porter with many keys. So he threw the porter on the ground, and took the keys, and opened the prison, and let out all the prisoners, and loosed their bonds. And when they saw Sir Gaheris they all thanked him, for they thought because he was wounded he had slain Sir Turquine. But Sir Gaheris said, "Not so, for it was Sir Launcelot that slew him; and I saw it with my own eyes. And he sendeth greeting to you all, and prayeth you to hasten to the court; but as for Sir Lionel and Sir Ector, he prayeth you to abide him at the court." "That shall we not do," said his brethren, "for we will find Sir Launcelot, if we live." "And so shall I," said Sir Kay, "find him before I come to court, as I am a true knight." Then all the knights sought the house where their armor was, and armed themselves, and each knight found his own horse, and all that belonged to them. And after supper some abode there all night, but Sir Lionel and Sir Ector and Sir Kay rode after Sir Launcelot to find him if they might.

Now Sir Launcelot had departed with the damsel. And as they rode the damsel told him that on the road they were going there was a false knight who distresseth all ladies and gentlewomen, robbing them and insulting them. Then Launcelot said, "This is a great shame unto the order of knighthood and contrary to his oath. And now, fair damsel, ye shall ride alone before, and I will

keep myself in covert, and if he trouble or distress you, I will rescue you, and teach him to act like a knight." So the damsel rode on her way with a soft ambling pace. And anon the knight came riding out of the wood and caught the damsel and drew her from her horse. With that came Sir Launcelot as fast as he could ride, and said to the knight, "Oh, thou false knight and traitor unto knighthood, who taught thee to distress ladies and gentlewomen?"

When the knight saw Sir Launcelot thus rebuking him, he answered not, but drew his sword and rode unto Sir Launcelot; and Sir Launcelot throwing his spear from him, drew out his sword, and struck him such a blow upon the helmet that he clave his head unto his throat. "Now hast thou the payment that thou hast long deserved," said Sir Launcelot. "That is truth," said the damsel, "for like as Turquine watched to destroy knights, so did this knight attend to distress ladies and gentlewomen, and his name was Sir Piers du Forest Savage."

"Now, fair damsel," said Sir Launcelot, "will ye have any more service of me?" "Nay, sir," she said, "not at this time, but may Almighty God preserve you wherever you may go, for you are the most courteous knight and the meekest unto all ladies and gentlewomen that now liveth." Then Sir Launcelot departed from the damsel and rode into the forest.

CHAPTER III

OTHER DEEDS OF SIR LAUNCELOT

AFTER parting from the damsel, Sir Launcelot rode forth again and visited many strange and wild countries. As it chanced he came one day to a small house, wherein was an old gentlewoman who lodged him with a good will and gave him a bed in her upper chamber. There Sir Launcelot unarmed himself and set his harness by him, and soon fell asleep. As he lay asleep he was aroused by a sound of one riding hard, and presently there came a knocking at the door. So Sir Launcelot arose and looked out of the window, and saw three knights riding after one man, who turned and defended himself against the three. Forthwith Sir Launcelot put on his armor quickly and let himself down from the window with a sheet, and then called aloud to them, "Turn, you knights, to me, and leave your fighting with that knight."

As soon as he said that, they all three left the knight and, alighting from their horses, rushed upon Sir Launcelot with their swords, and there

began a great battle. The knight whom they chased was Sir Kay, and he would have helped Sir Launcelot. But Sir Launcelot, who knew him by the device on his shield, said, "Nay, Sir Kay, I ask none of your help; leave them to me." So Sir Kay stood back, and soon Sir Launcelot had stricken them all to the earth.

At this they cried out, "Sir knight, we yield to thee as a man of might." "I will not have you yield to me," answered Sir Launcelot, "but if you will yield to Sir Kay, the seneschal, I will spare your lives, but not otherwise." "Fair knight," they said, "that we are loth to do, for we should have overcome Sir Kay had you not been here; therefore to yield to him we have no reason." "As to that," said Sir Launcelot, "make your own choice, whether you live or die, but if you yield it must be to Sir Kay."

So, to save their lives, they did as he commanded; and he made them swear to go to King Arthur's court on the next Whitsunday, and put themselves at the grace and mercy of Queen Guinevere, saying that Sir Kay had sent them. Then Sir Launcelot suffered them to depart, and he and Sir Kay went into the lodging; and when they came to the light, Sir Kay saw who it was, and he knelt down and thanked Sir Launcelot for having twice saved his life.

When Sir Kay was unarmed he asked for meat

of which, being hungry, he ate heartily. Then he was lodged in the same chamber with Sir Launcelot, and being very tired he slept very soundly. On the morrow Sir Launcelot rose early and left Sir Kay sleeping; and he took Sir Kay's armor and his shield and mounted his horse and rode away. Soon after Sir Kay awoke, and when he saw that Sir Launcelot had taken his armor and left him his own, he said, "Now by my faith, I know well that he will grieve some of King Arthur's knights, for they will think that it is I, and they will be bold with him; and because of his armor and shield I shall ride in peace." So he put on Sir Launcelot's armor, and thanked his host and departed.

Meanwhile Sir Launcelot rode on through the forest till he came to a fair open country full of rivers and green meadows. Before him he saw a long bridge, and on it three pavilions made of silk, with white shields hanging before them and great spears leaning beside them. Within each pavilion sat a knight; but Sir Launcelot rode past and spoke not a word. Then the knights said one to another, "It is the proud Sir Kay; he thinketh no knight is as good as he, but the contrary is often proved."

Then one of the knights, who was named Sir Gaunter, said, "By my faith, I will ride after him and essay him for all his pride and you may see how I shall speed." With that he armed himself and took his spear and shield and rode hard after

Sir Launcelot. When he came near him he called out, "Abide, thou proud knight, Sir Kay, for thou shalt not pass so quietly." So Sir Launcelot turned and they rode together with all their might, and Sir Gaunter's spear broke, but Sir Launcelot smote him down both horse and man. Then one of the other knights said, "Yonder knight is not Sir Kay; he is far mightier." "I dare lay my head," said the second knight, whose name was Sir Gilmere, "that he has slain Sir Kay, and hath taken his horse and harness." "Whether it be so or not," said Sir Reynold, the third knight, "let us go mount our horses and rescue our brother Sir Gaunter, though methinks we shall all have enough to do to match that knight."

So they rode to the place as hard as they could; and first Sir Gilmere put forth his spear, and Sir Launcelot smote him down so that he lay in a swoon. Then came Sir Reynold, and he and Sir Launcelot broke their spears on each other, and then began a hard battle with their swords. The other knights recovered themselves a little and rose and came to help Sir Reynold. When Sir Launcelot saw that, he first smote Sir Reynold so sorely that he fell from the saddle, and then he served the other two in like manner. So the three knights had to yield; but they asked him to tell them his name, for they were sure that he was not Sir Kay. "Let that be as it may," said Sir

Launcelot, "I charge ye to come to King Arthur's court on Whitsunday and yield yourselves to Queen Guinevere, and say that Sir Kay hath sent you." This they swore to perform, and then Launcelot rode away from them.

Sir Launcelot rode on until he came to a deep forest, and there he saw four knights of King Arthur's court sitting on their horses under an oak tree. There were Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Sagramour le Desirous who was a good knight, Sir Gawaine and Sir Ewaine. As Sir Launcelot passed, they thought by the device upon his shield that it was Sir Kay, and Sir Sagramour said he would prove Sir Kay's might. Thereupon he took his spear and rode against Sir Launcelot, who met him and smote him to the ground, both horse and man.

"Lo, my fellows!" quoth Sir Ector, "yonder you may see what a buffet he has got. That knight is much bigger than Sir Kay. Now we shall see what I may do with him." With that he took his spear in his hand, and rode toward Sir Launcelot, who served him as he had done the other, and still his spear held. "By my faith," said Ewaine, "that is a strong knight. I am sure he hath slain Sir Kay, and I see by his great strength it will be hard to match him." So in his turn he rode against Sir Launcelot, but fared no better than those who had gone before.

"Now," said Gawaine, "I see that I must needs encounter with that knight." So he took his spear in hand, and rode hard against Sir Launcelot, and each smote the other in the middle of the shield; but Gawaine's spear broke, and Sir Launcelot's thrust was so strong that Gawaine's horse reared up and fell over him. Sir Launcelot passed on smiling and said, "Heaven give him joy that made this spear, for I never held a better in my hand."

Then the four knights went each one to the other, and helped one another as they might. "What say ye to this knight," said Sir Gawaine, "who with one spear hath felled us four?" "We commend him to the devil," said the others, "for he is a man of great might." "You may well say it," quoth Gawaine, "for I dare lay my life that it is Sir Launcelot, for I know him by his riding. Howbeit we shall know when we come to court."

Sir Launcelot rode on his way and encountered many strange adventures; and many maidens sought his love, but he would have none of them for the love he bore to Queen Guinevere. At last he came to a castle, and there he saw a falcon that was caught by its legs and hung to the bough of a large tree in peril of its life. And he was sorry for the falcon. Then came a lady out of the castle and said, "O Launcelot, as thou art the flower of all the knights of the world, help me to get my hawk, for if my hawk is lost my lord will slay me."

"What is thy lord's name?" asked Launcelot. "Sir," she answered, "his name is Sir Phelot, a knight of the King of Northgalis." "Fair lady," said Sir Launcelot, "since you know my name, and require me on my knighthood to help you, I will do what I may to get your hawk, though I am an ill climber." So he alighted, tied his horse to a tree, and asked the lady to unarm him. When he was unarmed he put off all his clothes save his shirt and breeches, and then climbed the tree and recovered the falcon, and tying it to a rotten branch he threw it down to the lady.

Then suddenly the lady's husband, Sir Phelot, came out of the castle all armed and said, "Now, Sir Launcelot, I have found thee as I would have thee." "Ah, lady," said Sir Launcelot, "why have you betrayed me?" "She has done as I commanded," answered Sir Phelot. "There is no escape for thee; thine hour hath come when thou must die." "That were a shame," said Sir Launcelot, "that an armed knight should slay a naked man by treason."

Then Launcelot entreated him to let him have his sword, and then he would encounter him, even without his armor. But Sir Phelot answered, "I know thee too well for that; thou shalt get no weapon if I can prevent it." "Alas," said Sir Launcelot, "that ever knight should die weaponless." And therewith he looked about him, and

saw over his head a great bough of the tree that was leafless. This he broke off by pure might, and suddenly sprang from the tree so that his horse stood between him and Sir Phelot. Then Sir Phelot came round the horse and struck at him, with intent to slay him; but Launcelot cunningly warded off the stroke with the bough, and then struck the knight so mightily on the head with it that he fell to the ground senseless. He took his sword out of Sir Phelot's hand and struck his head from his body.

When the lady saw that her lord was dead she cried aloud, "Alas, why hast thou slain my husband?" "I am not the cause of it," said Sir Launcelot, "for with falsehood ye would have slain me with treason; and now it is fallen on you both." Then she swooned as though she would die. And Sir Launcelot got on his armor as fast as he could, for fear that more enemies might come from the knight's castle, and mounted his horse and rode away, thanking God that he had escaped from that adventure.

Still Sir Launcelot rode on through the woods and marshes and many other ways. And as he was riding through a valley, he saw a knight chasing a lady with a naked sword as if he would have slain her. As the lady saw Sir Launcelot she cried to him and prayed him to rescue her; at which Sir Launcelot spurred his horse and rode between

them saying, "Knight, fie for shame, why wilt thou slay this lady? Thou dost shame to thyself and all knights."

"What hast thou to do between me and my wife?" said the knight; "I will slay her over thy head." "That shall ye not," said Sir Launcelot, "for rather we will have ado together." Then the knight said to Launcelot that the lady had betrayed him; but she replied that it was not so, and that Heaven being her witness the accusation was false. "But sir," said the lady, "thou art the most worshipful knight in the world, I pray thee to save me, for whatsoever ye may say he will slay me, for he is without mercy."

Then the knight when he saw that Launcelot would protect her, said he would be ruled by whatever Launcelot thought best. And as they rode with Launcelot on the one side and the lady on the other, anon the knight asked Sir Launcelot to look behind them, saying, "Yonder come men of arms riding after us." As Sir Launcelot turned to look, thinking no treason, suddenly the knight struck off the lady's head with his sword.

When Sir Launcelot saw this bloody deed, he called the knight traitor, and said, "Thou hast shamed me forever." And then leaping from his horse he drew his sword and would have slain the knight. At this he fell flat to the earth and caught Sir Launcelot by the legs and cried for mercy.

"Fie on thee," said Sir Launcelot, "thou shameful knight, thou mayest have no mercy; therefore arise and fight with me." "Nay," said the knight, "I will not arise till ye grant me mercy."

Then said Sir Launcelot, "Now I will make thee this offer: I will unarm me to my shirt, and have nothing else upon me and my sword in my hand; and if you can slay me we will be quit forever." "Nay," said the knight whose name was Pedivere, "that I will never do." When Sir Launcelot saw that the knight would not fight him, he commanded that he take up the lady's head and bear it upon his back, and never rest until he brought it to Queen Guinevere. So Pedivere departed with the dead body of the lady and the head, and found the queen with King Arthur at Winchester, and there he told all the truth about the matter.

And the queen, shocked at the shameful deed, said, "Sir knight, this is a horrible deed and a shameful one, and a sore rebuke for Sir Launcelot; but this shall I give you in penance: Ye shall bear this body with you on horseback to the Pope of Rome, and of him receive your penance for your foul deeds; and ye shall never rest one night on the way in any bed, unless the dead body shall lie with you." So he made there an oath before the queen to do as she commanded and departed on his journey. And when he came to Rome, the Pope bade him to do penance for his wicked deed and then go again to

Queen Guinevere; and the lady's body was buried in Rome at the Pope's command. And after many days of penance and great sorrow, Sir Pedivere became a holy man and spent his days in solitude as a hermit.

After all these adventures, Sir Launcelot arrived at court two days before the feast of Pentecost; and King Arthur and all the court were passing glad at his coming. And all the knights that he had rescued from Sir Turquine came and gave him great honor and praise, and told King Arthur how Sir Launcelot had slain this mighty knight. And when Sir Gawaine, Sir Ewaine, Sir Sagramour, and Sir Hector de Marys saw Sir Launcelot in Sir Kay's armor, then they well knew that it was he that smote them all down with one spear; and ever and anon there was smiling and laughing among them over the adventure. Then Sir Kay told the king how Sir Launcelot had rescued him, and how he made the knights "yield to me and not to himself." And there they were, all three, and confirmed it all. "And by my faith," said Sir Kay, "because Sir Launcelot took my harness and left me his, I rode in peace, and no man would have do with me."

And all the other valorous deeds were recounted to King Arthur; so at that time Sir Launcelot had the greatest name of any knight in the world, and was the most honored both by high and low.

CHAPTER IV

SIR LAUNCELOT PUNISHES THE TREASON OF MALEAGANS

IT befell in the month of May that Queen Guinevere called to her several knights of the Round Table, and gave them warning that early upon the morrow she would ride a-maying into the woods and fields beside Westminster. "And I warn you," she said, "that ye be all well horsed, and that ye all be clothed in green, either silk or cloth; and I shall bring with me ten ladies, and every knight shall have a lady behind him, and every knight shall have a squire and two yeomen, and all shall be well horsed."

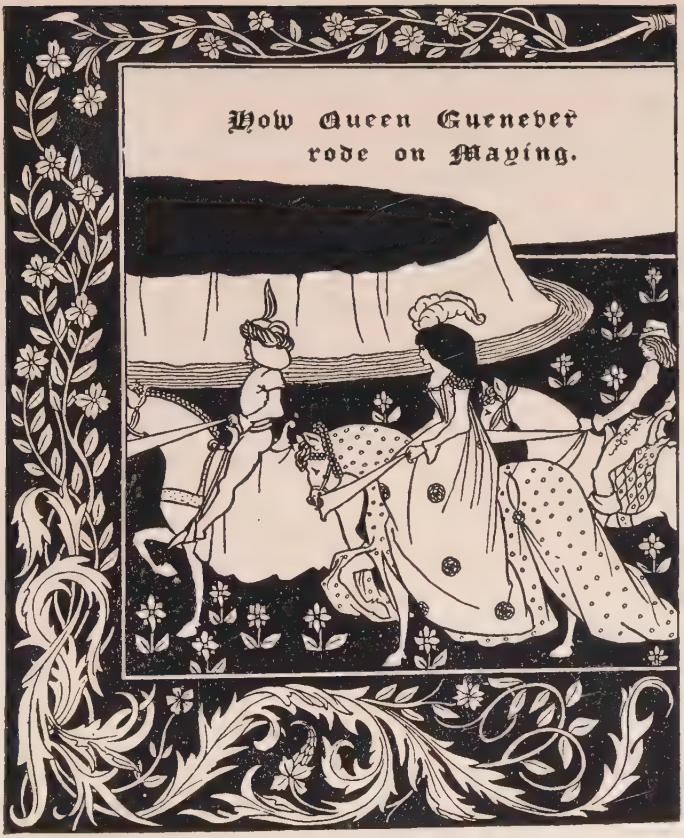
The names of the knights were Sir Kay, the seneschal, Sir Agravaine, Sir Brandiles, Sir Sagramour le Desirous, Sir Dodynas le Sauvage, Sir Ozanna, Sir Ladynas, Sir Persant of Ind, Sir Ironside and Sir Pelleas; and these ten knights made themselves ready, in the freshest manner, to ride with the queen. So upon the morrow they took their horses with the queen, and rode a-may-

ing through the woods and meadows, as it pleased them, with great joy and delight.

Now there was a knight named Maleagans, son to King Bagdemagus, who loved Queen Guinevere passing well, and had done so full many a year. This knight, Sir Maleagans, learned the queen's purpose and that she had no men at arms with her, but the ten noble knights all arrayed in green for maying. So he prepared him twenty men at arms and a hundred archers, to take captive the queen and her knights.

So when the queen had mayed awhile, and all were bedecked with herbs, mosses and flowers, there came out of a wood Sir Maleagans with eight score men all armed, and bade the queen and her knights yield themselves prisoners. "Traitor knight," said Queen Guinevere, "what is this that thou wilt do? Wilt thou shame thyself? Bethink thee how thou art a king's son, and a knight of the Round Table, and how thou art about to dishonor all knighthood and thyself?" "Be that as it may," said Sir Maleagans, "Know you well, madam, I have loved you many a year, and never before could I get you to such an advantage as I do now; and therefore I will take you as I find you."

Then the ten knights of the Round Table drew their swords, and the other party ran at them with their spears; and the ten knights manfully abode them, and smote away their spears. Then they


How Queen Guenever
rode on Maying.

lashed together with their swords till the knights of the Round Table had slain forty men, and several of themselves were smitten to the earth. So when the queen saw her knights thus sorely oppressed, and needs must be slain at the last, then for pity and sorrow she cried, "Sir Maleagans, slay not my noble knights, and I will go with thee upon this covenant, that they be led with me wheresoever thou leadest me." "Madame," said Sir Maleagans, "for your sake they shall be led with you into my own castle, if that ye will ride with me." Then Sir Maleagans charged them all that none should depart from the queen, for he dreaded lest Sir Launcelot should have knowledge of what had been done.

Then the queen privily called unto her a page of her chamber that was swiftly horsed, to whom she said, "Go thou when thou seest thy time, and bear this ring unto Sir Launcelot du Lake, and pray him, as he loves me, that he will come to me and rescue me. And spare not thy horse," said the queen, "neither for water nor for land." So the child espied his time, and lightly took his horse and departed as fast as he could ride.

Then Sir Maleagans said to the queen, "Madam, ye are about to betray me, but I will arrange for Sir Launcelot that he shall not come lightly at you." Then he rode with her and them all to his castle, and in all the haste that they might. And by the

way Sir Maleagans laid in ambush the best archers that he had to wait for Sir Launcelot. The page the queen had sent soon came to Westminster, and found Sir Launcelot, and told him his message, and delivered him the queen's ring. "Alas," said Sir Launcelot, "now am I shamed forever, unless I may rescue that noble lady."

Then he called for his armor and put it on him, and mounted his horse and rode as fast as he might; and men say he took the water at Westminster Bridge and made his horse swim over the Thames into Lambeth. Within a mile he came to a wood, where was a narrow way; and there the archers were laid in ambush. And there they shot at him and smote his horse so that he fell. Then Sir Launcelot left his horse and went afoot, but there lay so many ditches and hedges betwixt the archers and himself that he might not meddle with them. "Alas! for shame," said Sir Launcelot, "that ever one knight should betray another; but it is an old saying, 'a good man is never in danger but when he is in danger of a coward.'"

Then Sir Launcelot went awhile on foot, but he was much cumbered by his armor, his shield and his spear, and all that belonged to him. Then by chance there came by him a cart that had come hither to fetch wood. Now at this time carts were little used except to carry offal or convey criminals to execution. But Sir Launcelot took no

thought of anything but to hasten to the rescue of the queen; so he asked the carter to take him in his cart and bring him to the castle. "Thou shalt not come into my cart," said the man, "for I am sent to fetch wood for my Lord Sir Maleagans." At this Sir Launcelot leaped to him and gave him such a buffet that he fell to the earth stark dead. Then the other carter was afraid and cried, "Fair lord, save my life and I will bring you where you will." "Then I charge you," said Sir Launcelot, "that you drive me quickly to Sir Maleagans's gate." So Sir Launcelot leaped into the cart, and the carter drove at a great gallop towards the castle of Sir Maleagans.

Now it happened that Sir Gawaine was passing that way, and seeing an armed knight traveling in that unusual manner, he drew near to see who it might be. Then Sir Launcelot told him how the queen had been carried off, and how in hastening to her rescue his horse had been disabled and he had been forced to avail himself of the cart rather than give up the rescue of the queen. Sir Gawaine replied that it seemed unworthy of a knight to travel in such manner; but Sir Launcelot heeded him not.

At nightfall they came to a castle, and the lady thereof came out at the head of her damsels to welcome Sir Gawaine. But when she saw his companion she thought him to be a criminal and did

not wish to let him in; but to please Sir Gawaine she consented to do so. At supper they were going to send Sir Launcelot to the kitchen to eat; but at the request of Gawaine he was let to sit at the lady's table. The damsels would not prepare a bed for him; so he seized the first one he could find and slept therein.

On the morrow he saw from the turrets of the castle a train following a lady whom he thought to be the queen; and so thought Sir Gawaine, and they were eager to depart. The lady of the castle supplied Sir Launcelot with a horse, and they went on their way riding across the plain at full speed. Meeting some travelers, they learned from them that there were two roads that led to the castle; so the friends separated, each taking one of the roads.

Sir Launcelot found his way beset with many obstacles all of which he overcame but not without much loss of time. As the evening came he was met by a young and sportive damsel, who proposed to him a supper at her castle. Sir Launcelot was hungry and weary and he went with the lady to her castle and sat down with her at supper. As they ate and drank the lady began to make love to Sir Launcelot, but his heart was true to Queen Guinevere and he would not accept her love. Then suddenly the scene changed and he was set upon by six ferocious ruffians whom he dealt with so vigor-

ously that they were soon disabled. Then the scene changed again and he found himself alone with his fair hostess who told him that she was none other than his guardian fairy who had given tests of his courage and fidelity. The next day the fairy brought him on his road and gave him a ring, which she said would by its changes of color disclose to him all enchantments and give him power to subdue them.

Then Sir Launcelot continued on his way, taunted now and then by the travelers whom he met, who all seemed to have learned of his disgraceful drive in the cart. At night he reached another castle where he was made welcome with much show of hospitality, but in the morning he found himself in a dungeon loaded with chains. Consulting his ring, and finding that this was an enchantment, he burst his chains, seized his armor, broke open the gates of the tower, and continued his journey.

At length his progress was checked by a wide and rapid torrent, which could only be passed on a narrow bridge, on which a false step would lead to destruction. Leading his horse by the bridle and making him swim by his side, he passed over the bridge in safety. As soon as he reached the bank a lion and a leopard sprang to attack him; but he slew them both, and then, exhausted and bleeding, he threw himself upon the grass and endeavored to bind up his wounds. As he was thus engaged

he was accosted by Bagdemagus, the father of Maleagans, whose castle was then in sight, and at no great distance. This king, no less courteous than his son was haughty and insolent, offered him his assistance and informed him that the queen was safe in his castle, but could only be recovered by a combat with Maleagans.

Sir Launcelot rode on till he came to the gates of the castle, and then he alighted and cried, so that all the castle rang with it, "Where art thou, false traitor, Sir Maleagans and knight of the Table Round? Now come forth here, thou traitor knight, thou and thy fellowship with thee; for here I am, Sir Launcelot du Lake, that shall fight with you." And therewith he forced the gate wide open on the porter and smote him under his ear with his gauntlet that his neck burst asunder.

When Sir Maleagans heard that Sir Launcelot was there, he ran unto Queen Guinevere, and fell upon his knees and said, "Mercy, madam; now I put me wholly in your grace." At first the queen thought to advise Sir Launcelot to forgive him and especially so in order to avoid public scandal; but when afterward Sir Maleagans would make charge against the honor of the queen and Sir Launcelot, Sir Launcelot would not forgive him but said that he would fight him to prove the queen was guiltless of the charge made against her. So the day was fixed and the field chosen beside West-

minster; and they agreed that there should be no treason between them. Then they dined together, and after dinner Sir Maleagans asked Sir Launcelot if he would like to see the secrets of his castle. "With a good will," said Sir Launcelot, and so they went together from chamber to chamber, Sir Launcelot fearing no danger, for ever a man of worship and of prowess least dreads the perils of treason. But as he went with Sir Maleagans, he trod upon a trap, and the board rolled, and therewith Sir Launcelot fell down more than ten fathoms into a cave full of straw. Then Sir Maleagans departed and made no mention of where Sir Launcelot was. And when the queen and the knights missed Sir Launcelot they marveled what had become of him; but supposed that he had departed and gone unto Westminster. And now the knights told King Arthur how Sir Maleagans had accused the queen of treason, and how Sir Launcelot and Sir Maleagans were this day eight days to do battle before the king.

During this time Sir Launcelot lay within the cave in great pain; and every day there came a lady and brought him meat and drink and besought him for his love but all in vain. Then she said, "Sir Launcelot, you are not wise, for you may never leave this prison without my help, and then your lady Guinevere shall be burned in your default unless you be there, at the day of battle."

"Heaven defend," said Sir Launcelot, "that she shall be burned at my default; but if it be so that I cannot be there, it will be well understood by both the king and the queen, and with all men of worship, that I am dead, or sick, or in prison; for all men that know me will say for me that I am in some evil case if I am not there; and some one will take my quarrel in hand; and therefore know you well that you shall not frighten me. And if there were no more women in all this land, I would not say otherwise."

"Then thou art shamed," said the lady, "and destroyed forever." "As for the world's shame," said Sir Launcelot, "Jesu defend me; and as for my distress, it is welcome, whatsoever it be that God sendeth me." Then she left him. But on the day that the battle was to be, she came to him and said, "Sir Launcelot, methinketh you are too hard hearted, but if you would but kiss me I would deliver thee and give thee the best horse that is in Sir Maleagans's stable." "As for that," said Sir Launcelot, "I may do that and lose no worship." So he kissed her; and then she brought him to his armor, and when he was armed she took him to a stable where stood twelve good coursers, and told him to choose the best. He chose a white courser, and had him saddled, and mounted him with his sword by his side and his spear in his hand, and rode away, commending the lady unto God, saying,

"Lady, for this good deed I shall do you service if ever it be in my power."

Now while Sir Launcelot was thus delayed, they made ready a fire in which Queen Guinevere was to be burnt, for Sir Maleagans was sure Sir Launcelot could not come to do him battle; and he cried to King Arthur to do him justice or else bring forth Sir Launcelot. Then was the king and all the court sore abashed that the queen should be burnt in the default of Sir Launcelot. Then said Sir Lavaine, "My lord Arthur, I beseech you give me license to do battle here for my lord and master, and for to save my lady the queen."

"Thanks, gentle knight," said King Arthur, "for I know that the accusation against the queen is false, and each one of the wounded knights could do battle to prove it false if he were able." "So shall I," said Sir Lavaine, "in defence of my lord Sir Launcelot if you will give me leave." Then Arthur gave him leave, and he armed himself and rode into the list to do battle for the queen. And just as the heralds were to cry for the battle to begin, Sir Launcelot came riding with all the speed of his horse. At this King Arthur cried, "Ho! and abide."

Then Sir Launcelot rode before the king and told him of all the treason of Sir Maleagans and how he had served him. And when the king and the queen and all the lords knew of the treason of Sir

Maleagans they were ashamed of him. And Sir Launcelot made ready for the fight, and as they rushed together Sir Launcelot bore Sir Maleagans down quite over his horse's croup. Then they fought with their swords; but soon Sir Launcelot gave Sir Maleagans such a buffet that he fell to the earth. At this Sir Maleagans cried for mercy; at which Sir Launcelot for a moment knew not what to do. So he looked at Queen Guinevere if he might espy by any sign what she would have him do; and the queen nodded her head as if she would have Sir Maleagans slain.

Then Sir Launcelot bade the fallen knight arise and perform the battle to the end. But Sir Maleagans said, "I will never arise until ye take me as yielding recreant." "I offer you great odds," said Sir Launcelot, "that is, I will unarm my head and the left quarter of my body, and bind my left hand behind me, and so do battle with you." At this Sir Maleagans leaped to his feet and said to King Arthur that he would accept the offer. "What say you," said the king to Sir Launcelot, "will ye abide by your offer?" "Yea," said Sir Launcelot, "I will never recede from any offer I may make."

Then the knights disarmed Sir Launcelot, as he had said; and many a lady and knight marveled that he would thus jeopard himself. When all was ready Sir Maleagans came forward with his sword

all on high, and Sir Launcelot showed him his bare head and his bare left side. And when Sir Maleagans would have smitten him upon his bare head, Sir Launcelot put his sword quickly beneath the stroke and then with great force smote him such a buffet on the helmet that the stroke carved the head in two parts so that he fell dead upon the earth. Then they carried him from the field and the king suffered him to be buried and the mention made who slew him, and for what cause he was slain. And then the king and queen made more of Sir Launcelot and cherished him even more than ever before.

CHAPTER V

HOW SIR LAUNCELOT SAVED QUEEN GUINEVERE

UPON a time Queen Guinevere became much displeased with Sir Launcelot without any good cause, and drove him from the court with many shameful words. So Sir Launcelot departed with a heavy heart and no one knew where he had gone except his friend Sir Bors. Meantime the queen made a banquet to certain knights of the Round Table and especially to Sir Gawaine. And the queen was very gay and seemed to show that she did not miss nor regret the absence of Sir Launcelot.

Now Sir Gawaine was very fond of all manner of fruits, and in especial of apples and pears. The queen knowing this had provided many kinds of fruit for Sir Gawaine. Sir Gawaine had many enemies, especially one, Sir Pinel, who hated him exceedingly; and he secretly put poison in some of the apples in hopes to poison Sir Gawaine. But it chanced that a good knight named Patrise, cousin to Sir Mador de la Porte, took a poisoned apple;

and when he had eaten it he swelled so that he nearly burst, and fell down dead among them. Then every knight leaped up from the board, so full of wrath that they were nigh out of their wits. And they knew not what to say; for since Queen Guinevere had made the feast, they all had suspicion of her.

Then Sir Gawaine said to the queen, "My lady, know you well this dinner was made for me, seeing that all do know that I love fruit so well; and I see that I had well nigh been slain; therefore, madam, I dread lest ye will be shamed." At this the queen stood silent and sore abashed, not knowing what to say. But Sir Mador said, "This shall not be so ended, for I have here lost a noble knight of my blood; and therefore upon this shame and despite I will be revenged to the utmost." And there openly Sir Mador charged the queen with the death of his cousin Sir Patrise.

At this they all stood still not knowing what to say; for they had great suspicion of the queen. And the queen was so abashed that she could do nothing but weep, and at last she fell down in a swoon. With the noise and cry thus raised, King Arthur came to them; and when he learned what had come to pass he was deeply troubled; for Sir Mador stood before the king and charged the queen with treason. Then King Arthur said, "Fair lords, I regret of all this trouble, but I must

be a rightful judge; and though I regret that I may not do battle for my wife; I am sure she is not to blame, and I trust that some good knight will do battle for her, and that she may not be burnt when she is innocent. Therefore, Sir Mador, be not so hasty, for it may happen that she shall not be all friendless, but that some good knight will answer for her, or else it were a great shame to me and all my court."

"My gracious lord," said Sir Mador, "though you are a king, you are but a knight like ourselves, and therefore I beseech you not to be displeased. For there is none of the four and twenty knights that were bidden to the dinner but all have great suspicion of the queen. What say ye all, my lords?" said Sir Mador. Then they all answered that they could not excuse the queen, for she had made the dinner, and either it must come by her or by her servants.

"Alas," said the queen, "I made this dinner for a good intent, and never for any evil; and I appeal to Almighty God that I never proposed this evil deed." To this Sir Mador said, "My lord, the king, I pray you as ye be a righteous king, to give me a day that I may have justice." Then the king, constrained by the law, said to him that fifteen days hence he should be ready armed on horseback in the meadow beside Westminster. And if it so happen that there be any knight to encounter with him,

he might do his best, and God speed the right. And if it should happen that there be no knight to meet him on that day, then the queen must be burnt. At this Sir Mador was content and all the knights took their departure.

Then the king as soon as they were alone inquired of the queen how the matter had come about; to which the queen answered, "So Heaven help me, I know not how nor in what manner." "Where is Sir Launcelot?" said the king; "if he were here he would not grudge to do battle for you." "Alas," said the queen, "I know not where he is; but his brother and kinsmen say he is not in this realm." "For that I am sorry," said the king, "for none of these knights will do battle for you, and if Sir Launcelot were here he would soon stop this strife. But since he is away I counsel you to ask Sir Bors to do battle for you and for Sir Launcelot's sake."

So the queen sent for Sir Bors, and besought him for his aid. But he said, "I may not with worship have ado in this matter, for I was at the same dinner, and the knights will hold me under suspicion. And now, alas! you have driven away Sir Launcelot, for he would not have failed you in right or wrong. And I marvel how you dare for shame require me to do anything for you, inasmuch as ye have chased him from your country, him whom we all honor and worship." "Alas, fair knight," said the queen, "if you will not aid me I shall die a shame-

ful death and I have not deserved it." And therewith she fell down on her knees before him and besought Sir Bors to have mercy upon her, and save her from a shameful death. And King Arthur came and found the queen kneeling before Sir Bors. Then Sir Bors lifted her to her feet and said, "Madam, ye do great dishonor thus to kneel before me." "Ah, gentle knight," said the king, "have mercy upon my queen for I am certain that she is innocent of the crime; and I pray you that you do battle for her, for the love of Sir Launcelot."

"My lord," said Sir Bors, "you require of me the greatest thing that any man can require; for if I do battle for the queen I shall incur the wrath of many of my comrades of the Table Round; but yet I will do as you bid me for Sir Launcelot's sake and for your sake. I will be the queen's champion on that day unless there come by chance a better knight to do battle for her."

Then were the king and queen passing glad and thanked him heartily. And straightway Sir Bors departed secretly and rode unto Sir Launcelot, where he was with the hermit Sir Brasias, and told him all that had happened. And when Sir Launcelot heard it he said, "This is come happily as I would have it. And therefore, I pray you, make ready to do battle, but look that ye tarry till you see me come, as long as ye may. For I am sure Sir Mador is a hot knight and the more you suffer

him, the hastier will he be to do battle." "Sir," said Sir Bors, "let me deal with him, and do not doubt but you will have your will."

Then Sir Bors departed, and came to the court again. Now it was noised in all the court that Sir Bors would do battle for the queen; wherefore many knights were displeased with him that he should take upon him to do battle in the queen's quarrel, for there were few knights in the court who did not believe the queen to be guilty. So Sir Bors said to his fellows of the Table Round, "Know ye well, my fair lords, that it were a shame to us all if we suffered the most noble queen of the world to be shamed openly, considering that her lord and our lord is the man of the most worship in the world."

To this many of them replied, "As for our most noble King Arthur, we love him and honor him as well as you do; but as for Queen Guinevere, we love her not, because she is the destroyer of good knights." But Sir Bors stood up for the queen saying that she had always been a friend of good knights and that he was sure that the queen was not guilty of Sir Patrise's death as she never owed him any ill will, all of which he believed would be proved hereafter. And some of the knights were pleased with his words; but others were not pleased.

And now the day came on that the battle should take place. Then the queen sent for Sir Bors and

asked him how he was disposed, to which he replied that he should do as he had promised; but if a better knight came to do battle for her he would be discharged of his promise. Then they began to assemble in the meadow beside Westminster where the battle was to take place. And anon came King Arthur and the queen and the knights of the Table Round. Then the queen was placed in charge of the constable, and an iron stake was driven into the ground and a great fire was made about it so that if Sir Mador won the battle she should be burnt,—as was the custom of those days. And then Sir Mador came and took his oath before the king that the queen had done this treason to his cousin, and that he would prove it with his body, hand for hand. Right so came Sir Bors who said that he would maintain that Queen Guinevere was free from treason and that he would prove it with his hands.

"Then make thee ready," said Sir Mador, "and we shall soon prove whether thou or I be in the right." "Sir," said Sir Bors, "though I know you for a good knight, I have no doubt that I can withstand you; but I have only promised to do battle for the queen if there come not a better knight than I am and discharge me." "Then must thou either meet me forthwith," said Sir Mador angrily, "or say nay and withdraw." "Take your horse," said Sir Bors, "and you shall not have long to wait."

Then both of them went to their tents, and made themselves ready; but Sir Bors delayed as long as he could, till Sir Mador rode about the field crying to the queen, "Bid your champion come forth if he dare." Then was Sir Bors ashamed, and he took his horse and rode into the lists. Now as he raised his eyes he saw a knight coming from a wood all armed, upon a white horse, with a shield of strange device; and he came riding as fast as he could ride. And so he came to Sir Bors and requested him that he should take the battle in his place. At this Sir Bors rode unto King Arthur and told him that a strange knight had come that would have the battle for the queen. "What knight is he?" said the king. "I know not," said Sir Bors, "but such a covenant he made with me to be here this day."

Then the king called to the knight and asked him if he would fight for the queen; at which he answered that for that intent he came hither, "And I would that it may begin at once," he said, "for as soon as I have finished the battle I must depart hence, for I have many matters elsewhere. And know you well," said the knight, "that it is a great dishonor to all you knights of the Round Table, to see so noble a lady, and so courteous a queen as Queen Guinevere, to be thus shamed and rebuked among you."

Then they all marveled what knight it might be that so took the battle upon him, for there was not

one who knew him unless it was Sir Bors. Then this knight and Sir Mador rode to the lists' end, and there couched their spears, and ran together with all their might. And Sir Mador's spear broke all to pieces; but the other's spear held, and bore Sir Mador's horse backward to the earth in a great fall. But quickly avoiding his horse Sir Mador drew his sword and rushed upon the other knight who leaped from his horse and met him with his sword and shield. Thus they fought for an hour or more, giving each other many great strokes with their swords. But at last the strange knight smote Sir Mador to the earth; but as the knight stepped near to pull Sir Mador flat upon the ground, quickly Sir Mador arose and smote the knight through the thick of the thigh so that the blood ran freely forth.

Now when the strange knight felt himself thus wounded and saw the blood flow forth, he was much angered; and he raised himself upon his feet and gave Sir Mador such a buffet on his helm that he fell flat upon the earth. Then Sir Mador prayed the knight to save his life, and so yielded himself as overcome, and released the queen of his quarrel. "I will grant thy life," said the strange knight, "only on condition that thou release the queen forever, and that no mention be made upon the tomb of Sir Patrise that ever Queen Guinevere consented to that treason." "All this shall be done," said

Sir Mador, "I clearly discharge my quarrel forever."

Then the knights took up Sir Mador and led him to his tent, and the other knight went straight to the foot of the stair where sat King Arthur; and by that time the queen had come to the king, and each had kissed the other for joy. And when the king saw that knight at the foot of the stair he stooped down and thanked him as did likewise the queen. The king prayed him to put off his helmet and rest himself and take a cup of wine; and when he took off his helm to drink, then every one knew that it was Sir Launcelot. And when the king knew it, he took the queen by the hand and went unto Sir Launcelot and said, "Sir, I give you thanks for the great labor you have had this day for me and my queen."

To this Sir Launcelot replied, "My lord, know you well I ought of right ever to be in your quarrel, and in my lady the queen's quarrel to do battle, for ye are the man that gave me the honor of knighthood, and the queen did me great worship by finding my sword which through hastiness I had lost and gave it to me when I had need of it, and thus saved me from shame among all the knights. And therefore I promised her at that day ever to be her knight in right or in wrong."

As he thus spoke the queen beheld Sir Launcelot and wept so tenderly that she sank almost to

the ground for sorrow that he had done her so great a kindness when she had shown so great unkindness to him. And all the knights of the Table Round came to him and welcomed him, and great joy was made in all the court.

And some days after, the Lady of the Lake whose name was Viviane came to the court. She loved King Arthur and was ever doing some goodness to him by her sorcery and enchantments. And when she heard how Queen Guinevere had been accused of the death of Sir Patrise, she told it openly that the queen was not guilty, but that it was Sir Pinel who put poison into the apples with the intent to destroy Sir Gawaine because he had slain Sir Lamorack who was cousin to Sir Pinel. So the queen was excused, and Sir Pinel fled into his own country.

Then they buried Sir Patrise in the church at Westminster in a tomb, and upon the tomb was written, "Here lieth Sir Patrise of Ireland who was slain by Sir Pinel le Savage who poisoned apples to have slain Sir Gawaine." And it also was written on the tomb that Queen Guinevere was accused of the treason by Sir Mador, and how Sir Launcelot fought with him for the queen and overcame him in battle. And afterward Sir Mador sued daily and long for the queen's good grace; and in time by the means of Sir Launcelot he stood again in the queen's favor and all was forgiven.

CHAPTER VI

SIR LAUNCELOT AND ELAINE OF ASTOLAT

SOON after this King Arthur proclaimed a great tournament to be held at Camelot, which is now Winchester. To this tournament there came many kings from divers countries and with them many brave and noble knights. As the day came near, King Arthur set off for the festival with many of the knights of the Round Table, and rode that day as far as Astolat, that now in English is called Gilford.

Sir Launcelot would not ride with the king but remained behind with the intent to attend the tournament in disguise. So, after the king had gone, he mounted his horse and set off with no attendants, disguised to counterfeit an old knight who was going to be a spectator of the tournament; and by eventide he reached the town of Astolat. So complete was the disguise that none of the knights of the Round Table knew him; but by chance King Arthur espied him as he rode into the town and knew him. "It is well," said King Arthur to the knights that were with him, "for I

have now espied a knight that will play his part at the tournament and do marvels." And when the knights would know who it was, he said, "I will not tell you at this time." And so the king smiled and went to his lodging.

Sir Launcelot rode to a castle of an old baron known as Sir Bernard of Astolat. The old baron knew not Sir Launcelot but made his reverence to him and gave him right good welcome. Then Sir Launcelot asked the old baron to lend him a shield that was not openly known, saying that his own was too well known, and he desired to enter the tournament secretly. The baron said he should have his desire, for he seemed to him one of the likeliest knights he had ever seen. He told him that he had two sons, the youngest one named Sir Lavaine, and that he might have the shield of the elder son if he would permit the younger son to ride with him to the tournament, to which Sir Launcelot consented. He then asked Sir Launcelot to tell him his name, but Sir Launcelot asked to be excused at this time, saying that after the tournament he would return and tell him.

Now the old baron had a daughter that was called the Fair Maid of Astolat. She was passing beautiful and full of grace in all her motions, and her name was Elaine le Blanc. When she saw Sir Launcelot her heart was full of love for him, and she asked him that he would wear a token from her

SIR. LAVNCELOT.
AND. ELAINE. LE.
BLANC.

at the tournament. Now Sir Launcelot had never worn a token for any lady or damsel, but, charmed with her simple beauty and remembering that he was to be disguised so that no one would know him, he consented, saying, "Fair maiden, I will grant you to wear your token upon my helmet; but tell me what it is." "Sir," she said, "it is a red sleeve of mine richly embroidered with pearls." And so she brought it to him; and Sir Launcelot took the sleeve from her hand, saying, "Never did I before so much for any damsel." Then Sir Launcelot gave his own shield unto the damsel, and prayed her to keep it until he came again.

On the morrow King Arthur and his knights departed; and when they were gone, Sir Launcelot and Sir Lavaine made themselves ready, each bearing white shields, and Sir Launcelot carrying with him the red sleeve upon his helm; and so they rode till they came to Camelot. And there was a great press of kings, dukes, earls, and barons, and many noble knights who had come to attend the tournament. And when the day of the tournament was come, the trumpets blew to call the people unto the field and King Arthur was set on high upon a scaffold to behold who did best.

Now there was a division of the kings and knights into two parties, the stronger party for King Arthur, and the weaker party against him. And all the knights made ready for the fray re-

solved to win great honor at the tournament. Then Sir Launcelot also made ready, bearing the red sleeve upon his helmet; and he and Sir Lavaine rode out of the city privily and placed themselves in a little wood behind the party that held themselves against King Arthur's party. And now the jousts began, and King Arthur's party was too strong for the others, and smote down many of them to the earth. When Sir Launcelot saw this, he and Sir Lavaine rode forward out of the wood; and they smote down many brave and noble knights of King Arthur's; so much so that the knights of the Round Table drew back from the fight.

As King Arthur and Sir Gawaine saw this, Sir Gawaine said, "I wonder what knight that is that does such wondrous deeds of arms upon the field." "I think I know who he is," said King Arthur, "but I will not name him now." "I would say that he is Sir Launcelot," said Sir Gawaine, "by his riding and his buffets; but he weareth a red sleeve upon his head, and I have never seen Sir Launcelot have any token of lady or gentlewoman at a tournament." "Let him be," said King Arthur, "he will be better known before he departs."

And now Sir Bors, Sir Ector, and Sir Lionel rushed upon Sir Launcelot, and all three smote him with their spears and bore his horse to the earth. And Sir Bors smote him through the shield into his side, and the head of the spear was left in Sir

Launcelot's side. Then Sir Lavaine rushed upon the king of the Scots and smote him to the earth and took his horse and brought it to Sir Launcelot, and placed him thereon. And then Sir Launcelot, though he felt himself so sorely hurt that he thought he might not endure, rushed upon Sir Bors, Sir Ector, and Sir Lionel, and smote them all to the earth, and might have killed them had he not seen their faces as their helms were raised from their heads. And then he rode into the thickest of the press and fought so fiercely that he did the most marvelous deeds of arms that ever man saw or heard of.

So when the fight was over the prize was given to the knight with the white shield that bore the red sleeve. Then all the knights of the party came forward and did him great honor; but Launcelot said, "I pray you let me depart in haste, for I am sore hurt;" and therewith he groaned piteously and rode away quickly to the woodside; and when he was sure that he would not be seen, he cried to Lavaine that he should help him to draw the spear head from his side. And as Sir Lavaine drew it forth, Sir Launcelot gave a great groan, and the blood burst forth, so that at length he sank down and became deathly pale and swooned away. And when he came to himself again, Sir Lavaine helped him to mount, and they rode till they came to a hermitage, where they staunched his blood and gave him wine to refresh him.

Then King Arthur called all the knights of both parties together to a great feast. And he inquired of the party who had fought against him for the knight with the red sleeve who had done such noble deeds, that he might award him the prize for his valor. At this they told him that the knight was sorely hurt and had ridden away as soon as the tournament was done. Then the king asked who the knight was; but no one could tell him who he was. And the king said, "Alas, these are to me the worst tidings that came to me this seven year, for I would not for all the lands I hold, that this noble knight were slain." And Sir Gawaine said, "It were a pity to this land if this noble knight should die, for he is one of the noblest knights that ever I saw in a field handle a spear or a sword." Then Sir Gawaine took a squire and rode all about Camelot within six or seven miles; but he could hear no word of the strange knight.

Now within two days King Arthur and his knights started to return to London. And when they reached Astolat, it chanced that Sir Gawaine was lodged with Sir Bernard where Sir Launcelot had lodged on his way to Camelot. And Sir Bernard and his daughter, the fair Elaine, came to him and asked him who did best at the tournament; to which Gawaine replied that a knight with a white shield and a red sleeve did the best, having smitten down forty knights of the Table Round, and that

a young knight with him with a white shield had also done passing well.

As the fair maid of Astolat heard this she said, "Now am I very happy that that knight hath done so well, for he is the man in the world that I first loved, and truly shall be the last that I shall ever love." Then Sir Gawaine asked her who he was, but she said she did not know his name; but that he lodged with her father on his way to the tournament and left his shield which he said was too well known among noble knights, and had taken the shield of her brother. Then Sir Gawaine asked to see the shield; and when it was brought to him he saw that it was Sir Launcelot's shield.

Then Sir Gawaine said, "Ah, fair damsel, if indeed you love that man, you love the most honorable man in the world, and the man of the most worship. And truly you have cause to love him," he said, "for I have known that knight for four and twenty years, and never have I known before that he ever bore a token or sign of any lady or gentlewoman or maiden at any joust or tournament. And therefore, fair maiden, ye are much beholden to him to give him thanks." And then she inquired where he had gone, and Sir Gawaine told her that he was sorely wounded and had gone somewhere to be attended for his hurt. At this the maiden's heart was full of sorrow, and she said to her father that she must go to seek him and care

for him; to which her father gave consent. So she made ready and rode away in search of Sir Launcelot.

Meanwhile Sir Gawaine sought King Arthur and told him what he knew, that the knight with a white shield was Sir Launcelot. "All that I knew beforehand," said the king; "for I espied him when he came to his lodgings late in the evening at Astolat; and for that reason I would not suffer you to join in the jousting. But I marvel," said the king, "that he should have borne the sign or token of any damsel, for I never knew or heard say that he ever bore the token of any earthly woman." "And I marvel also," said Sir Gawaine, "for she loveth him with all her heart, and she hath ridden out to seek him." So the king and all came to London, and there Sir Gawaine disclosed to all the court that it was Sir Launcelot that jousted best. And when the queen heard of it, she was well nigh out of her mind, both because Sir Launcelot was wounded and that he had worn the token on his helm.

As the fair Elaine came to Winchester seeking for her wounded knight, by chance she met Sir Lavaine who was riding out to exercise his horse; and when she saw him she called him and bade him to take her to where Sir Launcelot was. And when she came to him and saw him so pale and weak on his bed, she could not speak, but suddenly fell to the earth in a swoon. And when she was relieved

she said, "My lord, Sir Launcelot, alas! that you are in this sad plight,"—and she swooned again. Then Sir Launcelot prayed Sir Lavaine to take her up and bring her to him; and when she came to herself Sir Launcelot kissed her, and said, "Fair maiden, be of good cheer, and come and comfort me; and of this little hurt I have I shall soon be whole by the grace of God. But I marvel that ye know my name."

Then she told him how Sir Gawaine had lodged with her father and there by his shield discovered his name. "Alas," said Sir Launcelot, "that my name is known, for I am sure that it will cause sorrow and anger;" for he knew that Sir Gawaine would tell Sir Bors and Queen Guinevere, and also what would be in their hearts when they heard of it. And there the maiden stayed and never left him day or night, but watched him and did such attendance that never was woman more kindly to a man than she. And there Sir Bors found him and made great lament that he had hurt "the noblest knight of the world." But Sir Launcelot said that the fault was his own since out of pride he had tried to meet three noble knights at once. And Sir Bors saw all the loving care of fair Elaine, and that she was passing beautiful, and he said to Sir Launcelot, "Would, fair cousin, that you could love her and take her for your wife." But Sir Launcelot said, "Ye know that I shall never wed

any maiden, though this one is full worthy of my love." And then they talked of many more things; and still the fair Elaine nursed him with tender care night and day. And so within a month Sir Launcelot was well and strong again.

And now Sir Launcelot hearing that there was to be another tournament at Winchester, resolved to enter it. So he sent Elaine into the woods to gather herbs and then armed himself and mounted his horse to ride away. But the motion of his horse caused his wounds to reopen, and faint from loss of blood he fell to the ground and lay there as if dead. Now by chance the maiden Elaine came thither and when she saw Sir Launcelot she thought him dead and wept as if her heart would break. And she took him in her arms and kissed him and did whatever she might to awake him, calling Sir Bors and her brother traitors that they should let him leave his bed. Then his friends, Sir Bors and Sir Lavaine, who had ridden away with him, took him up and bore him back to the castle and there the fair Elaine nursed him again until he was entirely well.

Now when he was ready to depart, he saw that the fair Elaine was very sad, and he guessed that she would have him for her husband. So he thanked her for all her sweet ministering to him, but said that he would never be a wedded man so long as he should live; but that if she were ever

wedded he would give a great present to her and her heirs. But so deep was her love for Sir Launcelot that when he rode away she fell to the earth in a swoon,—and her women took her up and carried her to her chamber. And when she came to herself she would not be comforted, but made such sorrow day and night that she never slept nor eat nor drank, but ever made complaint of Sir Launcelot. At the end of ten days she was so weak that they saw that she would die; so they sent for a holy man who shrived her and gave her the sacred rites. Then she prayed saying, "Sweet Lord Jesu, I take thee to record that I have been no great offender against thy laws, but that I loved this noble knight so out of measure that I cannot live without his love."

Then she called her father and her brother, and she prayed that her brother might write a letter for her, and that this letter might be placed in her hands as she died and then that she be put in a fair bed with all her richest clothes and the bed be carried to the Thames and put in a barge and a man with her such as might be trusted to steer the barge down the river and that the barge might be covered with black samite, over and over. "Let this be done, I pray thee," she said to her father, which he duly promised should be done; and then she folded her hands upon her bosom and died. And when she was dead, the corpse and the bed

were taken the next day unto the Thames, and placed in a barge, and a man put in charge of it, who steered it down the river to Winchester.

Now it chanced that King Arthur and Queen Guinevere were sitting at a window of their palace talking together; and as they looked toward the Thames they espied this black barge floating down the river and had great marvel what it meant. Then the king called three knights and sent them to the river; and there they found the fairest corpse lying in a rich bed, and a poor man sitting at the end of the barge who would not speak a word. So the knights returned to the king, and told him what they had found. "That fair corpse will I see," said the king; so he took the queen by the hand and went thither; and there they saw the fairest woman lying in a rich bed, covered to her waist with thick clothes, all of cloth and gold; and she lay as though she were sleeping with a smile upon her face. Then the queen espied the letter in her hand, and the king took it and said, "I am sure this letter will tell who she is and why she has come hither."

Then the king took the letter to his chamber and broke the seal and called a clerk to read it; and this was written in the letter:—"Most noble knight, Sir Launcelot; now hath death made us two at debate for your love. I was your lover, I whom men called the Fair Maid of Astolat; therefore unto all ladies I make my moan, and I beg you to pray for

my soul, and to bury me, at the least, and offer my mass-penny. This is my last request. God is my witness that I die a pure maiden. Pray for my soul, Sir Launcelot, as thou art peerless."

This was all the letter; and when it was read the king and the queen and all the knights wept for pity at the doleful complaint. And when Sir Launcelot heard the letter read, he said, "My lord Arthur, know you well I am right heavy at the death of this fair damsel. But Heaven knows I was never the cause of her death by my own willing; but I would say that she was both fair and good, though she loved me with a love I could not return." "Ye might have showed her," said the queen, "some act of gentleness that might have saved her life." To which Sir Launcelot replied, "Madam, she would have nothing but my love, and love cannot be constrained. It must arise out of the heart and not by any constraint."

"That is true," said the king, "love is free and will not be bound; for where it is bound it loseth itself." Then the king said to Sir Launcelot, that he should oversee her burial and that she be interred worshipfully, to which Sir Launcelot agreed. And so upon the morrow she was interred richly and with all due honor; and Sir Launcelot offered her mass-penny, and all the knights of the Table Round who were there did the same.

CHAPTER VII

HOW SIR LAUNCELOT WEDS KING PELLES'S DAUGHTER BY ENCHANTMENT

UPON a certain feast of Whitsuntide, Sir Launcelot left King Arthur's court to ride in search of adventures. After many days he came to the bridge Corbon and having passed it he rode on to the land of King Pelles. And there he saw the fairest tower that ever he saw; and in the city about it was a town full of people, and all the people when they saw him cried at once, "Welcome, Sir Launcelot du Lake, the flower of all knighthood, for by thee we shall be helped out of danger."

"What mean ye," said Sir Launcelot, "that ye cry so upon me?" "Ah, fair knight," they answered, "here is within this tower a dolorous lady that hath been here in sorrow many winters; for she ever boileth in scalding water and no one can save her. And but of late Sir Gawaine was here, and he could not help her and so left her in her pain." "So may I," said Sir Launcelot, "leave her in pain

as well as Sir Gawaine." "Nay," said the people, "we well know that it is Sir Launcelot who shall deliver her."

Then they brought Sir Launcelot into the tower; and when he came to the chamber where the lady was the doors of iron unlocked and unbolted themselves. And so Sir Launcelot went into the chamber that was very hot, and there he saw the fairest lady that he ever had seen. She had been put therein by the enchantment of Queen Morgan le Fay because she was called the fairest lady of that country. And there she had been five years, and never might be delivered unless the best knight of the world should take her by the hand. Then Sir Launcelot took her by the hand, and brought her out to the people.

As soon as they had come forth from the tower, the lady said to Sir Launcelot, "Come with me to a chapel that we may give thanks to God for my deliverance;" and Sir Launcelot replied, "Madam, I will go with you as you desire." So they went to the chapel and there they gave thanks and all the people with them. And then the people said to Sir Launcelot, "Since you have delivered this lady, you shall also deliver us from a serpent that is here in a tomb."

Then Sir Launcelot took his shield and said, "Bring me hither, and whatever I may do for you, under the will of God, that I will do." So when

Sir Launcelot came hither he saw written upon the tomb letters of gold which said thus: "Here shall come a person of king's blood which shall surpass all other knights; and he shall slay this serpent."

So then Sir Launcelot lifted up the tomb, and there came out a horrible and fiendish dragon spitting fire out of its mouth. Then Sir Launcelot drew his sword and fought with the dragon a long time, and at last Sir Launcelot slew the dragon. Thereat came King Pelles, the good and noble knight, and saluted Sir Launcelot and took him into the castle and made him good cheer. And anon there came a dove at a window, and in her mouth there a seemed a little censer of gold. And therewith there was such a savor as if all the spice in the world had been there. And forthwith there was upon the table all manner of meats and drinks that they could think of. And there came in a damsel, passing fair and young, and she bore a vessel of gold in her hands, and thereto the king kneeled devoutly and said his prayers, and so did all who were there. And when Sir Launcelot asked what this vessel might mean, King Pelles said, "This is the richest thing that any man hath living; and when this thing goeth about, the Round Table shall be broken up; for know you well that this is the holy Sangreal that ye have seen."

And now King Pelles would fain have found means to have Sir Launcelot love his daughter, the

fair Elaine, for it had been foretold that if he would take her for his bride they should have a son that would be the noblest and purest knight of all the world, and by whom the Holy Grail should be achieved. But Sir Launcelot had pledged himself to be the champion of Queen Guinevere, and would not give his love to any maiden no matter how fair she might be. So knowing the king's desire, the dame Brisen who was an enchantress, threw a magic spell over Sir Launcelot under which he made the fair Elaine his bride.

Now when Sir Launcelot came to himself he was very wroth that he had been thus deceived; and though he honored the fair Elaine, he would not live longer with her because of his pledge of knighthood not to take any one for his wife. And so Sir Launcelot left the castle and rode away towards King Arthur's court full of heaviness of heart that even by enchantment he had broken his vow of knighthood. When the queen learned what had been done she was well nigh out of her wits and raved as a mad woman, and said to Sir Launcelot, "False traitor knight thou art. Look thou; never abide in my court and never come in my sight again." "Alas," said Sir Launcelot, and therewith he fell down to the floor in a swoon and when he awoke out of his swoon he leaped out of a bay window into a garden, and there with thorns was all scratched in his face and his body, and so ran forth

he knew not whither and was full out of his mind as ever man was.

And thus for two years or more he ran through the woods living on fruit and such other food as he might get, with little clothing save his shirt and breeches. And as he wandered to and fro he came to a pavilion upon which hung a white shield and two swords, and two spears leaned against a tree. When Sir Launcelot saw the swords, he ran to one of them and took it in his hand, and drew it out, and then he lashed at the shield so hard that all the meadow rang with the noise. At this there came forth a dwarf, and leaped upon Sir Launcelot, and would have taken the sword out of his hand, but Sir Launcelot took him by both shoulders and threw him to the ground so hard that his neck came near to being broken. As the dwarf cried loudly for help, there came forth from the pavilion a likely knight named Sir Bliant, richly dressed in scarlet; and when he saw Sir Launcelot he knew that he was out of his mind, and said to him with fair speech, "Good man, lay down that sword, for, it seemeth to me, that thou hath more need of sleep and of warm clothes than to wield a sword."

"As to that," said Sir Launcelot, "come not too near me, for if you do, know you well that I shall slay you." When the knight saw that, he started backward toward the pavilion. And the dwarf quickly armed him and so the knight thought by

force to take the sword from Sir Launcelot; but when Sir Launcelot saw him come out with his sword in hand, he flew at him with such a might and hit him such a buffet upon his helm that the knight fell to the earth as if he were dead. And then Sir Launcelot ran into the pavilion and leaped into the warm bed. As soon as the knight awakened out of his swoon, he looked up meekly and asked where was the mad man that had given him such a buffet, "for," he said, "such a buffet had I never of man's hands."

"Sir," said the dwarf, "it is not worship to hurt him, for he is a man out of his wit, and doubt you not he hath been a man of great worship, and for some deep sorrow he hath fallen mad; and he seemeth much like Sir Launcelot, for I saw him once at a great tournament at Lonazep." "Jesu defend," said the knight, "that ever that noble knight Sir Launcelot should be in such a plight. But whosoever he may be, I will do him no harm." Then he said to the dwarf, "Go in haste on horseback unto my brother, Sir Seliaunt, and tell him of the adventure, and bid him bring an horse litter, and we will bear this knight into my castle." And so they did, and they bound his hands and his feet and gave him good meats and drinks, and brought him again to his strength, but they could not restore his mind even to know himself. And thus he was there more than a year and a half.

Then upon a day Sir Bliant, the lord of the castle, took his arms and rode forth with a spear to seek adventures; and as he rode there met him in the forest two adventurous knights; the one was Sir Breuse sans Pitie and the other his brother Sir Bertelot. These two knights ran both upon Sir Bliant, and brake their spears upon his body, and then drew their swords and fought a long battle; but at last Sir Bliant was sorely wounded, and feeling himself growing faint, he fled on horseback to the castle. As the two knights came riding after him toward the castle, Sir Launcelot saw them, and crazy as he was, he felt sorry for Sir Bliant, and broke his chains from his legs, and ran out of the gate and met the two knights and pulled down one, Sir Bertelot, from his horse, and writhed his sword out of his hand and leaped unto Sir Breuse, and gave him such a buffet upon the head that he tumbled backward over his horse's cropper. When Sir Bertelot saw his brother have such a fall, he got a spear in his hand, and would have run Sir Launcelot through; but Sir Bliant struck off the hand of Sir Bertelot; at which both of the knights sprang upon their horses and fled away.

When Sir Selivant came and saw what Sir Launcelot had done for his brother, and saw that he was hurt with the breaking of the chains, then was he sorry that he had bound him; and he said, "Bind him no more, for he is happy and gracious."

Then they made great joy of Sir Launcelot and they bound him no more; and so he abode there half a year more. And in a morning early Sir Launcelot was aware that a great boar came near the castle with many hounds following it; but the boar was so big that no hounds could tear him; and the hunters came after blowing their horns, both on horseback and on foot. Now Sir Launcelot saw where one of them alighted and tied his horse to a tree and leaned his spear against the tree. Then Sir Launcelot came to the horse and leaped into the saddle, and got the spear in his hand, and rode after the boar, and came up to him and ran at him with his spear. Therewith the boar turned quickly and tore out the lungs and the heart of the horse, so that Sir Launcelot fell to the earth, and before he could get away from his horse the boar rove him in the fleshy part of the thigh. Then was Sir Launcelot wroth and he quickly sprang upon his feet and drew his sword and smote off the boar's head with a single stroke.

Thereat came out a hermit, and when he saw Sir Launcelot with such a wound, he came to him and would have taken him into his hermitage. But when Sir Launcelot heard him speak, he was so wroth with his wound that he ran upon the hermit and would have slain him; but the hermit ran away; and when Sir Launcelot might not overtake him for loss of blood, he threw his sword at the hermit.

Then the hermit turned again and asked Sir Launcelot how he was hurt; to which Sir Launcelot replied, "Fellow, this boar hath bitten me." "Then come with me," said the hermit, "and I will heal you." But Sir Launcelot replied, "Go thy way, and deal not with me."

Then the hermit went his way, and as he went he met with a good knight and many men with him. And the hermit said, "Sir, here is near by the goodliest man that ever I saw, and he is sorely wounded with a boar, and yet he hath slain the boar. But he will not be helped, and he will die of his wound, which would be a great pity." Then the knights, at the desire of the hermit, got a cart and in that cart they put the boar and Sir Launcelot, for Sir Launcelot was so feeble with the loss of blood that they could now easily deal with him. And so Sir Launcelot was brought unto the hermitage, and there the hermit healed his wound. But the hermit could not provide suitable food for Sir Launcelot, and so he waxed feeble again both in mind and in body and became more crazy than ever. And at length, upon a day, he ran away into the forest; and by adventure came into the city of Corbin where lived the dame Elaine.

And so it was when he entered the town he ran through it to the castle, and all the young men of the city ran after him, and gave him many good strokes; and Sir Launcelot turned upon them and

ELAINE. FINDS.
THE. MAD. SIR.
LAVNCELOT.

such as he could reach he threw upon the ground, so that they fled from him; and then turning again he fled towards the castle. Seeing him thus beset, there came out from the castle knights and squires for to rescue Sir Launcelot; and when they beheld him and looked upon his person, they thought they never saw so goodly a man. And when they saw so many wounds upon him, they all deemed that he had ever been a man of worship. And then they clothed his body and gave him a little house, with straw for him to sleep upon; and every day they would throw him meat and set him drink; but there were few or none that dared to bring meat to him in their hands.

One day as he lay sleeping, Elaine chanced to come near where he was, and as soon as she saw him she knew that it was Sir Launcelot. Then she called for her father and when he came to him he saw that Sir Launcelot was out of his mind. So he called the dame Brisen, the enchantress, who when she saw him said, "We must be wise how we deal with him, for this knight is out of his mind, and if we awake him rudely we do not know what he may do." So she cast an enchantment upon him so that he would not awaken for an hour; and then they took him up and carried him into the tower, and so into the chamber where was the Holy Grail, and laid him beside that holy vessel. And then there came a holy man and uncovered the vessel,

and so by virtue of that holy vessel, Sir Launcelot was healed and made whole both in mind and body.

When Sir Launcelot opened his eyes and saw King Pelles and dame Elaine, he was in a maze; and he said, "Tell me, I pray thee, how came I here? For Heaven's sake, my lord, let me know how I came here." Then Elaine told him how he had lost his mind and had wandered in the forest, and how by chance one of her maids saw him as he was sleeping by the well and brought her to him, and how she had told her father and they had carried him and laid him beside the Holy Grail, and by virtue of it he had been healed.

Then Sir Launcelot asked how many knew of his madness; and when he learned that it was known only to Elaine and her father and dame Brisen, he said, "I pray you for the love of Heaven to keep it secret and let no one in the world know it, for I am sore ashamed that I have thus miscarried." And so he lay more than a fortnight, before he might stir for soreness. Then that he might not be known, he assumed the name of Le Chevalier Mal Tait, the knight that hath trespassed. And King Pelles took him to the castle of Bliant where he took up his abode with the king and dame Elaine and with many knights and ladies. The castle was on an island in the midst of a deep clear lake, which Sir Launcelot named the Joyous Isle.

And now his knightly spirit soon returned, and

hearing of a joust near the castle, he called unto him a dwarf and sent him to the jousting place to make a cry in the presence of all the knights, saying that there was a knight in the Joyous Isle whose name was Le Chevalier Mal Tait who would joust against any knights that might come, and that any one who should put him to the worse would receive as a prize a jewel of worth and a jerfalcon. So when the cry was made, there came to the Joyous Isle many knights; and Sir Launcelot met them and did such deeds of arms as never was seen even in King Arthur's court. And after the joust was over he made them all a great feast at which they all had good cheer.

Meanwhile there came that way Sir Percivale de Galis and Sir Ector de Maris, who had long been searching for Sir Launcelot. And when they beheld that gay castle, they would have gone into it, but there was neither bridge to cross nor boat to bear them. Then they saw on the other side a lady, and Sir Percivale called to her and asked her who was in the castle. To which she answered, "The fairest lady in the land named Elaine, and the fairest and strongest knight on earth who calls himself Le Chevalier Mal Tait. And if ye would come into the castle," she said, "you must ride to the other side, and there you will find a vessel that will bear you and your horses."

So the two knights departed and came unto the

vessel. And then Sir Percivale alighted and said to Sir Ector de Maris, "Ye shall abide here until I know what manner of knight this is, for it were a great shame unto us, as he is but one knight, if we were both to do battle with him." "Do as you list," said Sir Ector de Maris, "here I shall abide until I hear of you again."

Then Sir Percivale passed over the water, and when he came to the castle gate he said to the porter, "Go thou unto the knight of the castle and tell him that here cometh an errant knight that would joust with him." Then the porter took him within the castle to the jousting grounds, and gave the message to Sir Launcelot who was soon ready for the adventure. And now as they rode together with great force their spears were so strong that both the horses and the knights fell to the ground, and then they drew their swords and fought for two hours each giving the other many sore wounds.

At length Sir Percivale said, "Fair knight, I ask thee to tell me thy name, for I never met such a knight as you are." "Sir," said Sir Launcelot, "my name is Le Chevalier Mal Tait. Now tell me your name," said Sir Launcelot; "I require you, as ye are a gentle knight." "Truly," said Sir Percivale, "my name is Sir Percivale de Galis, the son of King Pellenore."

When Sir Launcelot heard this he cried out, "Alas, what have I done to fight with you, a knight

of the Round Table, since I was some time your fellow in King Arthur's court." And therewith Sir Launcelot kneeled down upon his knees and threw away his sword, which when Sir Percivale saw it he marveled what it meant. And then he said, "Sir knight, whoever you may be, I charge thee, upon the high order of knighthood to tell me thy true name." Then he said, "Truly my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake, the son of King Ban."

"Alas," said Sir Percivale, "what have I done? I was sent by the queen to seek you, and so I have sought you nigh this two years; and yonder is your brother, Sir Ector de Maris, who waiteth for me on the other side of yonder water. Now I pray you forgive me mine offence that I have done here." "That is soon forgiven," said Sir Launcelot.

Then Sir Percivale sent for Sir Ector de Maris; and when Sir Launcelot saw him, he ran unto him and took him in his arms, and they both kneeled down and wept so that all had pity who beheld it. Then came dame Elaine and she made them great cheer as much as lay in her power, and she told them how and in what manner Sir Launcelot came unto that country, and how he was healed.

Then said Sir Ector, "I am your brother, and ye are the man in all the world whom I love the best, and I would not counsel you to your harm. But there has been great sorrow at King Arthur's court since your departure, and the king and queen made

such dole and sorrow, that it was a marvel to hear and see. And ye must remember the great worship and renown that ye be of, how that ye have been more spoken of than any knight now living, for there is none that beareth the name now but ye and Sir Tristram. Therefore, brother, I advise you to make ready to ride unto the court with us, and I dare well say there was never knight better welcome unto the court than you."

"Well," said Sir Launcelot, "I will do what you counsel, and ride with you." So they made ready their horses, and took their leave of King Pelles and the dame Elaine; and when Sir Launcelot was ready to depart the dame Elaine made great sorrow and wept as if her heart would break.

And now within five days' journey they came to Camelot. And when Sir Launcelot was seen among them, the king and all the knights made great joy of him; and when Sir Percivale began to tell of all the adventures and how Sir Launcelot had been out of his mind all the time of his absence and how he called himself Le Chevalier Mal Tait and in three days smote down five hundred knights, Queen Guinevere wept as she would have died, and then afterward she made great joy.

And the king said, "I marvel for what cause, Sir Launcelot, ye went out of your mind." "My lord," replied Sir Launcelot, "if I did any folly I have found that I sought." And so the king said no

more, but all of Sir Launcelot's kin knew for whom he went out of his mind. And many great lords and ladies, when they heard that Sir Launcelot was come to court again, made great joy, and there were great feasts held and much rejoicing among them all.

THE BOOK OF THE HOLY GRAIL

CHAPTER I

THE QUEST OF THE SANGREAL

AND now came the marvelous adventure of the Sangreal, or Holy Cup, which was the cup from which our Saviour drank at his last supper with his disciples. It was said that this cup had been given to Joseph of Arimathea, who carried it to Europe, and with it the spear with which the soldier Longius pierced the Saviour's side. These sacred relics had been kept from generation to generation by some one of the descendants of Joseph of Arimathea who was pledged to a life of purity in thought, word, and deed.

For a long time the Sangreal was visible to all pilgrims and its presence wrought great blessings upon the land in which it was preserved. But on a time one of the holy men who had charge of it broke his vow of purity, and instantly the spear pierced his body and the Sangreal vanished from

their sight. Men wondered where the Holy Cup had gone and often thought of making search for it but no knights seemed pure enough to undertake the adventure. Now and then it appeared unexpectedly and wrought some miraculous work, to disappear again as soon as the work was done.

It so happened in the days of King Arthur that two brave and noble knights, Sir Percivale and Sir Ector, met in the forest and engaged in combat until both were sorely wounded so that they were not expected to live. Then Sir Percivale, who was one of the purest knights in the world, knelt down and made his prayer devoutly unto Jesus. And as he prayed, behold there came by the holy vessel of the Sangreal with all manner of sweetness and savor; but they could not clearly see who bore the vessel, though Sir Percivale had a glimmering of it and of the maiden all in white who bore it; for he was a very pure knight. And forthwith both the knights were made whole, and they arose and gave thanks to God with great gratitude.

Again it happened as has already been told that Sir Launcelot was wounded by a wild boar nigh unto death. And he went and laid himself down by a well and fell asleep. And here he was found by the fair Elaine who loved him as her life. And she called her father King Pelles to come to the well and he found Sir Launcelot not only sorely wounded but seemingly out of his mind. Then the

king chose four persons whom he most trusted, and with the fair Elaine they bore Sir Launcelot unto a tower and so into a chamber where the holy vessel had appeared, and laid him beside the holy vessel. And there came a holy man and uncovered the vessel, and by virtue of that sacred vessel Sir Launcelot was healed by miracle. And then the vessel disappeared again.

All these things made them more desirous of going in search of the Sangreal in hopes that they might find it and restore it to the people again. Many years before, Merlin, the great prophet and enchanter, sent a message to King Arthur by Sir Gawaine, that he should undertake the recovery of the Sangreal, saying that the knight who should accomplish the sacred quest was already born, and of a suitable age to enter upon it.

CHAPTER II

SIR GALAHAD AND THE FLOATING SWORD

NOW at the vigil of Pentecost, when all the fellowship of the Round Table had come to Camelot, there rode into the hall a fair gentlewoman whose horse was white with sweat and foam. She went forward to Sir Launcelot and saluted him and besought him that he would go into the forest with her to dub a young man a knight. At this Sir Launcelot armed himself and rode with her, and before the day was done they came to an abbey of nuns. While he stood talking with the abbess there came in twelve nuns bringing with them a youth who had not yet reached manhood but who was strong and passing fair.

"Sir," said the nuns, "we bring you this young man, whom we have long nourished with care, and pray you to make him a knight; for a worthier man than he may not receive the order of knighthood." Sir Launcelot looked at the young man and saw that he was seemly and demure as a dove and of

wonderful beauty of form and features and his heart went out with great love for the handsome youth. And he asked, "What is his name?" "We call him Galahad," they replied. "From whom has he sprung?" said Sir Launcelot. "His mother is dead," they answered, "but his father is a full noble knight as ye shall soon learn." "Then shall he receive the high order of knighthood at to-morrow's high feast," said Sir Launcelot.

So on the morrow at early morn Sir Launcelot made the young man a knight, saying to him as he touched him with his sword, "God make thee a good man, for beauty faileth thee not as any man liveth." Then when they had broken their fast, Sir Launcelot said to the young knight, "Fair sir, will you not come with me to the court of King Arthur?" But the young knight replied, "I humbly beg your pardon, but I cannot come at this time. Trust me, however, to follow you soon."

Then Sir Launcelot left the abbey and rode back to Camelot. And there he found a great array of knights, some of them strangers, who walked around the Round Table reading the names written in letters of gold in many of the seats, and saying, "Here sits Gawaine, here Launcelot, here Percivale," and so with the others. At length they came to the Seat Perilous in which no man but Percivale had ever dared to sit, and he had ceased to sit therein. And as they looked at the Seat

Perilous they found letters newly written of gold, that said, "Four hundred winters and fifty-four accomplished after the passion of our Lord Jesu Christ ought this siege to be fulfilled."

Then they all said, "This is a marvelous thing." And Sir Launcelot reckoned the time and said, "This siege ought to be fulfilled this day, for this is the feast of Pentecost after the four hundred and fifty-fourth year. And now I advise that these letters be hidden till he comes for whom this seat was ordained." So they took a cloth and placed it over the letters of the Seat Perilous.

And now as they stood speaking, an old man entered the hall saying, "I bring you marvelous tidings, for there is near by at the river, a great stone, floating in the water, and in that stone there is sticking a sword." The king said, "I will see the marvel." And so he and all his knights went to the river, and there they saw the stone floating in the water and sticking in the stone was a fair and rich sword adorned with precious stones. And as they looked in wonder, the stone came floating in to where they stood. And on the sword were subtle letters which read, "Never shall man take me hence, but only he by whose side I ought to hang; and he shall be the best knight in the world."

When the king had seen these letters he said unto Sir Launcelot, "Fair son, this sword ought to be yours, for I am sure that ye are the best knight

in the world." But Sir Launcelot replied, "I am sure this sword is not for me, and I have not the hardihood to set my hand to it. And beside, whosoever essayeth to take that sword and faileth in so doing, shall receive a wound by that sword which shall be long in healing."

Then said the king to Sir Gawaine, "Fair nephew, essay you to take the sword." But Sir Gawaine answered, "I must not do that." But when the king commanded him he essayed to try it; so he took the sword by the handle but he could not stir it. Then Sir Launcelot said, "Now know you well that this sword shall wound you so sorely that you will wish that you had never set your hand thereto for the best castle in the realm."

When the king heard this he was sorry that he had commanded Sir Gawaine against his will. Nevertheless he said to Sir Percivale that he should essay to draw the sword. And Sir Percivale said he would gladly do it to bear Sir Gawaine's fellowship. And therewith he set his hand on the sword and drew it strongly, but he could not move it. But there were no more who dared to set their hands thereto.

And now the knights took their seats at the Round Table, every seat being filled except the Seat Perilous. As they sat there at meat, a marvel befell, for suddenly all the doors and windows shut of their own accord, yet was not the room greatly

darkened, and the men looked into one another's faces with wonder and affright. Then King Arthur spoke and said, "Fair fellows, this has been a day of strange events."

As he spake there came into the hall an ancient man clothed all in white, and with him he brought a young knight without sword or shield save a scabbard hanging at his side. Addressing the people, the old man said, "Peace be with you, fair lords." And then turning to King Arthur he said, "Sir, I bring you here a young knight that is of king's lineage and of the kindred of Joseph of Arimathea; and by his hand are many strange adventures to be accomplished." At this King Arthur said, "God make him a good man, for beauty faileth him not as any man liveth."

Then the old man made the young knight to disarm himself, and Sir Launcelot saw that it was the young man whom he had knighted that morning at the abbey. The old man then led the young knight unto the Seat Perilous, and lifting up the cloth found there letters, saying, "This is the seat of Galahad, the high prince." And the old man seated the young knight therein.

At this all the knights of the Table Round marveled greatly that one so young should dare to sit in the Seat Perilous. And as they looked upon him they said to one another, "This is he by whom the Sangreal shall be achieved." And

King Arthur went and took him by the hand and said, "Sir, ye are welcome, for ye shall move many good knights unto the quest of the Sangreal and ye shall achieve that which never knight might bring to an end."

Meanwhile the queen heard of the strange young knight who had been seated in the Seat Perilous, and she came with many of her ladies to see this strange thing. As she came within the hall and saw Sir Galahad, she stood a moment in surprise and then exclaimed, "It is Sir Launcelot in youth again." Then going up to the young knight, she said, "Fair sir, tell me truly who is your father and who is your mother."

"Fair lady," Sir Galahad replied, "King Pelles is my grandsire and Elaine was my mother; but as for my father I know him not." "Then do I," said the queen, "for he sits beside you. Sir Launcelot is your father and you are the son of the noblest knight that ever wore sword." At these words Sir Launcelot rose up in haste, and went to the young knight and clasped him in his arms and kissed him and said, "My son! can it be? The son of the fair Elaine?" And each clasped the other in his arms, and they kissed each other many times.

Then King Arthur came to Sir Galahad and bade him welcome to his court: and he took him by the hand and went down with him to show him the marvel of the stone. When Sir Galahad saw it he

said, "This is no marvel, for this sword is mine and for the surety of this sword I brought none with me; for here by my side hangeth the scabbard." Then he took hold of the sword and lightly drew it from the stone and put it in the sheath and said, "This sword was aforetime that of the good knight Balin, with which he slew his brother Balan. The scabbard I wear was Balin's scabbard, and it was Merlin who put the sword into the stone saying that no hand should draw it but that of Sir Launcelot, or his son Galahad."

Therewith the king and all his knights espied a lady on a white palfrey riding down the river toward them. As she came she saluted the king and the queen, and then asked for Sir Launcelot. "I am here," Sir Launcelot replied; at which she fell a-weeping and said, "How your great doing is changed since this morning!" "Why say you so?" said Sir Launcelot. "Because," she replied, "ye were before this day the best knight of the world, but who should say so now would be a liar, for there is now one better than ye. For he hath taken the sword which you dared not essay." As touching that," said Sir Launcelot, "I know I never was of the best." "Yes," said the damsel, "that you were, and you are still of the best of any sinful man of the world; and I bring you word that there shall befall you the greatest worship that ever befell the King of Britain; for this day the Sangreal

shall appear in thy house and shall feed thee and all thy fellowship of the Round Table." So she departed and went the way she had come.

On the next day the king said, "Now at the quest of the Sangreal shall all of ye of the Round Table depart, and never more shall I see you again all together; therefore I will that ye all repair to the meadow of Camelot, for to joust and tourney yet once more before you depart." In this the purpose of the king was to see Sir Galahad proved. So they all assembled on the meadow as the king desired.

Then Sir Galahad, by request of the king and queen, put on his harness and his helm, but a shield he would not take for any prayer of the king. And the queen was in the tower with all her ladies, to behold the tournament. Then Sir Galahad rode into the midst of the meadow and there began to break spears marvelously, so that all men regarded him with wonder, for he surpassed all the knights upon the field except two, Sir Launcelot and Sir Percivale.

As soon as the jousting was at an end, the king and knights went back to Camelot where they assembled for even-song in the great minster. Thence they went to the palace hall where they all gathered round the table for their evening meal. And now as they sat around the table suddenly there was heard a clap of thunder, and then a light

burst forth seven times brighter than the day. Each knight as he looked at his fellow saw him, in seeming, fairer than ever before. All the hall was filled with sweet odors, and every knight had such meat as he loved best. Then as the storm and glare passed away, there entered into the hall the Holy Grail, covered with white samite, so that none could see it, and it passed through the hall and disappeared.

During this time no one spoke a word, but when they had regained their breath to speak, King Arthur said, "We ought greatly to thank the Lord for what he hath shewed us to-day." Then Sir Gawaine rose up, and made a vow that for twelve months and a day he would seek the Sangreal, and not return till he had seen it. When they of the Round Table heard Sir Gawaine make this resolve they all arose and the most part of them vowed the same. When King Arthur heard this he was sorely grieved, for he knew well he might not gainsay their vows. But his heart was full of sorrow at the thought of losing the companionship of the knights of the Table Round. Turning to Sir Gawaine, he said, "Alas, you have nigh slain me with the vow and promise you have made, for you have bereft me of the fairest fellowship that ever was seen together in any realm of the world; for when they shall depart hence, I am sure that all shall never meet more in this world."

Then the king and queen went to the minster, and the knights followed them. And after service they put on their helms and made ready to depart; and there was great sorrow. As they rode through the street of Camelot there was weeping of the rich and the poor and the king turned away and could not speak for weeping. As for the queen she went to her chamber and there she wept sorely, fearing she might see Sir Launcelot no more. And so they departed and every knight took the way that seemed best to him.

CHAPTER III

THE QUEST OF SIR GALAHAD AND SIR GAWAINE

SIR GALAHAD went forth without his shield, and thus rode four days and found no adventure. And on the fourth day, after evensong, he came to a white abbey and there he was received with great reverence, and was led to a chamber. Here he met two knights, King Bagdemagus and Sir Ewaine, and they made of him great solace. "Sirs," said Sir Galahad, "what adventure brought you hither?" "Sir," said they, "it is told us that within this place is a shield which no man may bear unless he be worthy; and if any one unworthy should attempt to bear it, it shall surely do him a mischief." Then King Bagdemagus said, "I fear not to bear it, and that shall ye see tomorrow."

So on the morrow they arose, and heard mass; after which King Bagdemagus asked where the adventurous shield was. Anon a monk led him behind an altar where the shield hung, white as snow; but in the midst there was a red cross. The monk

said, "This shield ought not be worn but by the best knight in the world." "Well," said King Bagdemagus, "I shall essay to wear it." Then King Bagdemagus took the shield and bare it out of the minster; and he said to Sir Galahad, "If it please you, abide here till ye know how I shall speed."

Then King Bagdemagus and his squire rode forth and when they had ridden a mile or two, they saw a goodly knight coming toward them, in white armor, and he came as fast as his horse could run, with his spear in rest; and King Bagdemagus met him with his spear and broke it upon the white knight; but the other struck him so hard that he broke the mails, and thrust him through the right shoulder, for the shield covered him not, and so bare him from his horse.

And therewith he alighted and took the white shield from him saying, "Knight, thou hast done thyself great folly; for this shield ought not to be borne but by him that hath no peer living." And then he came to King Bagdemagus's squire and said, "Bear this shield unto the good knight, Sir Galahad, that thou left in the abbey, and greet him well for me." "Sir," said the squire, "what is your name?" "Take thou no heed of my name," said the knight, "for it is not for thee to know, nor for any earthly man." Then the white knight turned his horse and rode away.

IV
SIR. GALAHAD
TAKETH THE
WHITE SHIELD

Then the squire went to King Bagdemagus and asked him whether he was wounded or not, to which he replied, "I am sore wounded, and full hardly shall I escape death." Then the squire set him on his horse and brought him to an abbey; and there he was taken down softly and unarmed, and laid in a bed, and his wound was looked to; and he lay there long, and hardly escaped with his life. And the squire told Sir Galahad that the knight who had stricken King Bagdemagus had sent the shield to him.

The next day Sir Galahad took the shield, and rode forth with it, and within a while he came to a hermitage where he met the white knight, and each saluted the other courteously. "Sir," said Sir Galahad, "can you tell me the marvel of the shield?" "Sir," replied the white knight, "that shield belonged of old to the gentle knight, Joseph of Arimathea; and when he came to die he said, 'Never shall man bear this shield about his neck but he shall repent it, unto the time that Sir Galahad, the good knight, bear it, the last of my lineage, the which shall do many marvelous deeds.'" And then the white knight vanished away.

Meantime Gawaine departed and rode away many days forward and backward, and at last he came to the abbey where Sir Galahad took the white shield. And they told Sir Gawaine of the marvelous adventure that Sir Galahad had done.

"Truly," said Sir Gawaine, "I am not happy that I took not the way that he went, for, if I may meet with him, I will not part from him lightly, that I may partake with him all the marvelous adventures which he shall achieve." "Sir," said one of the monks, "he will not be of your fellowship." "Why so?" said Sir Gawaine. To which the monk replied, "Because ye are wicked and sinful, and he is full blessed."

Then Sir Gawaine rode on again, and after slaying a knight who opposed him he came to another hermitage; and there he found the good man saying his evening song of our Lady. And he asked the good man that he might stay at his house, which was gladly granted. And when the good man learned who he was and what he had done, the good man said, "Sir Gawaine, thou must do penance for thy vows." "Sir," said Gawaine, "what penance shall I do?" "Such as I will show," said the good man. "Nay," said Sir Gawaine, "I will do no penance, for we knights adventurous often suffer great woe and pain." "Well," said the good man, and then he held his peace. And on the morrow Sir Gawaine departed.

Then Sir Galahad rode on until he came to a waste forest; and there he met Sir Launcelot and Sir Percivale, but they knew him not for he was disguised. So Sir Launcelot dressed his spear and rode upon his son Sir Galahad, who also rode upon

Sir Launcelot and smote him down horse and man. And then Sir Galahad drew his sword and dressed himself to Sir Percivale and smote him so hard a blow upon the helm that had not the sword swerved, Sir Percivale would have been slain.

This encounter took place before a hermitage where dwelt a holy woman, a recluse. And when she saw Sir Galahad ride, she said, "God be with thee, best knight of the world. And had the two knights, Sir Launcelot and Sir Percivale, known you so well as I do, they would not have encountered with you." When Sir Galahad heard her say this, he was sore afraid he might be known; so he smote his horse with his spurs and rode a great pace forward from them. Then they both perceived that he was Sir Galahad and mounting their horses they rode fast after him but in a while he was out of sight; and so they turned again with heavy hearts.

CHAPTER IV

THE QUEST OF SIR LAUNCELOT AND SIR PERCIVALE

NOW Sir Launcelot left Sir Percivale and rode over the waste and entered a wide forest and held no path but as wild adventure led him. And at last he came to a stone cross, and by the cross was a stone of marble, but it was so dark that Sir Launcelot did not know what it was. Then as he looked he saw an old chapel, but no people therein. So he tied his horse to a tree, and put off his shield, and hung it upon a tree; and then he went unto the chapel, and looked through an opening in the wall, and found the chapel waste and broken. And within he saw a fair altar, full richly arrayed with cloth of silk; and there stood a fair candlestick which bare six great candles, and the candlestick was of silver. When Sir Launcelot saw this sight he had great wish to enter the chapel, but he could find no place where he might enter. Then he was passing heavy and dismayed. And he returned and came to his horse and took off his saddle and bridle, and let him pasture; and then un-

laced his helm, and ungirded his sword, and laid him down to sleep upon his shield before the cross.

And as he lay half waking and half sleeping, he saw come by him two palfreys all fair and white, which bare a litter upon which lay a sick knight. And Sir Launcelot heard him say, "O sweet Lord, when shall this sorrow leave me, and when shall the holy vessel come by me whereby I shall be healed?" And thus the knight complained for a long while, and Sir Launcelot heard it. And as he looked, Sir Launcelot saw the candlestick with the lighted tapers come before the cross; but he could see nobody who bore it. Also there came a table of silver and the holy vessel of the Sangreal; and therewithal the sick knight sat up and held up both his hands and said, "Fair, sweet Lord, who is here within this holy vessel, take heed of me that I may be whole of this malady." And therewith, upon his hands and knees, he went so nigh that he touched the holy vessel and kissed it; and anon he was whole. Then the holy vessel went into the chapel again, with the candlestick and the light, so that Sir Launcelot wist not what became of it.

Then the sick knight arose and kissed the cross; and anon his squire brought him his arms and asked his lord how he did. "I thank God, right heartily," he said, "for through the holy vessel, I am healed. But I have great marvel of this sleeping knight who hath neither grace nor power to

awake when this holy vessel was brought hither." "I dare well say," said the squire, "that he dwelleth in some deadly sin whereof he was never confessed." And then the squire brought him Sir Launcelot's helm and sword, and when he was armed he took Sir Launcelot's horse that was better than his own, and so departed.

And then anon Sir Launcelot awoke, and set himself upright, and bethought him of what he had seen, and whether it were a dream or not. And he heard a voice saying, "Sir Launcelot, more harder than is the stone, and more bitter than is the wood, and more naked than is the leaf of the fig-tree; therefore go thou from hence and withdraw thou from this holy place." And when Sir Launcelot heard this, he was passing heavy, and wist not what to do; and so he departed sore weeping and cursed the time that he was ever born. Then he went to the cross, and found his helm and his sword and his horse, taken away. Then he called himself the most unhappy of all knights, and said, "My sin and my wickedness hath brought me into great dishonor. For when I sought worldly adventures and worldly desires, I ever achieved them, and had the better in every place, and never was I discomfitted in any quarrel, was it right or wrong. And now I take upon me the adventure of holy things, I see and understand that mine old sin hindereth me, so that I had no power to stir nor to speak

when the holy blood appeared to me." Thus he sorrowed till it was day, and he heard the birds begin to sing; and then was he somewhat comforted.

Then he departed from the cross on foot and went into the forest. And there he found a hermitage, and a hermit therein, who was going to mass. And Sir Launcelot kneeled down and prayed for mercy for his wicked deeds. So when mass was done, Sir Launcelot called the hermit to him, and prayed him for charity to hear his confession. "With a good will," said the good man. And then he told that good man all his life, and how he had loved a queen unmeasurably for many years. "And all my great deeds of arms," he said, "that I have done, I did the most part for the queen's sake, and for her sake would I do battle, were it right or wrong, and never did I battle at all only for God's sake, but for to win worship, and to cause myself to be better beloved; and little or naught I thanked God for it. I pray you counsel me."

"I will counsel," said the hermit, "if ye will insure me that ye will never come in that queen's fellowship again, as much as ye may forbear." And then Sir Launcelot promised the hermit, by his faith, that he would no more come in her company. "Look that your heart and your mouth accord," said the good man, "and I shall insure you that

you shall have more worship than ye ever had." Then the good man enjoined Sir Launcelot such penance as he might do, and he absolved Sir Launcelot, and made him abide with him all that day. And Sir Launcelot repented himself greatly.

Now when Sir Launcelot started to ride after Sir Galahad, Sir Percivale turned again to the recluse where he thought to obtain tidings of the knight which Sir Launcelot had followed. And so he kneeled at her window, and the recluse opened it and asked him what he wanted. And he told her that he was a knight of King Arthur's court and that his name was Sir Percivale de Galis. When the recluse heard his name was Sir Percivale she had great joy, for she had loved him more than any other knight, and this was because she was his aunt. And of her he learned that the knight was Sir Galahad. And he said, "Fair aunt, I long to know some way to find him, for much would I love the fellowship of him." "Fair nephew," she replied, "you must ride to a certain castle and there shall ye hear true tidings of him."

Then he departed and rode till the hour of noon; and he met in the valley about twenty men of arms, who bore on a bier a dead knight. And when they saw Sir Percivale they asked him whence he was; and when he told them he was of King Arthur's court they all cried out at once, "Slay him." Then Sir Percivale rode upon them and smote the first

to the earth and his horse upon him. At this seven of the knights rode upon him and smote upon his shield all at once, while the others slew his horse so that he fell to the earth. And then they had taken him or slain him but by chance the good knight, Sir Galahad, came riding that way; and when he saw all the knights upon one he cried out, "Save me that knight's life."

Saying this he rode toward the twenty men at arms as fast as his horse might drive and smote the foremost, horse and man, to the earth. And when his spear was broken he set his hand to his sword, and smote on the right hand and on the left, that it was a marvel to see; and at every stroke he smote down a knight, or put him to flight, so that they would fight no more, but fled to a thick forest, and Sir Galahad followed them.

When Sir Percivale saw him chase them so he thought it must be Sir Galahad, and he cried aloud, "Ah, fair knight, abide and suffer me to thank you, for right well have ye done for me." And he started to follow Sir Galahad on foot. But Sir Galahad rode so fast that he soon passed out of sight. When Sir Percivale saw that he would not turn, he said, "Now am I very wretched and most unhappy above all knights." So in this sorrow he abode all that day till it was night and then he was faint and laid himself down and slept till midnight. When he awoke he saw before him a woman,

who said to him, "Sir Percvale, what dost thou here?"

He answered and said, "I do neither good, nor great ill." "If thou wilt promise me," she said, "that thou wilt fulfil my will when I summon thee, I will lend thee my own horse, which shall bear thee whither thou wilt go."

Sir Percivale was glad of her proffer and promised to fulfil all her desire. "Then abide you here," she said, "and I will go and bring you a horse." And so she came soon again and brought a horse with her that was inky black; and when Sir Percivale saw it he marveled because it was so great and so well appareled. Then he leapt upon the horse and thrust him with his spurs, and he sped with such magical strides that within an hour he bare him four days' journey, until he came to a rough water which roared; and his horse would have borne him into it.

Now when Sir Percivale came near the water and saw it so boisterous he doubted if he could pass it; and so he made the sign of the cross upon his forehead. At this the horse shook off Sir Percivale and plunged into the mad waves, crying and roaring; while a flame a foot long darted from his nostrils. Then Sir Percivale said, "God be thanked that I am here alive, for I have ridden the foul fiend in the image of a horse and scarcely have I escaped perdition." So he commended himself to God

and prayed him that he would keep him from all such temptations; and thus he prayed all that night till it was day.

And now he saw that he was in a wild place, and that it was closed with the sea all about him. And as he looked forth over the sea, he saw a ship come sailing toward him; and it came and stood still under the rock. And when Sir Percivale saw this, he hied him thither, and found the ship covered with silk; and therein was a lady of great beauty, clothed in richest apparel. And when she saw Sir Percivale she said, "Who brought you in this wilderness where ye be never like to pass hence?"

Then he told her that he was seeking the best knight in the world and she replied that if he would do her will, she would bring him to that knight whom she had seen chasing two other knights into the water while all escaped to the other side. At this Sir Percivale was passing glad and he promised to do her will if she would keep her word to him. Then he asked her of her country and her lineage.

To this she replied, "I am a gentlewoman that am disinherited, and was once the richest woman in the world." "Damsel," said he, "I have great sorrow for you, and would know who it was who disinherited you." "Sir," she said, " my enemy is a great and powerful lord, and aforetime he made much of me, so that with his favor and my beauty I

had more pride than I ought to have had. I also said something with which he was not pleased; and so he has driven me from himself and from my heritage. Therefore I meet no good knight or good man but I get him on my side if I may. And for all I know thou art a good knight and I beseech thee to help me."

Then Sir Percivale promised her all the help that he might give her, and she thanked him. And as the weather was very hot, she called to her a maiden and bade her bring forth a pavilion. And as she did so and pitched it upon the gravel, she said, "Sir, now you may rest yourself in this heat of the day." Then he thanked her, and she put off his helm and his shield, and there he slept a great while.

When he awoke he was very hungry, and he asked her if she had any meat. And she said, "Yea, ye shall have enough." So she set before him on a table all manner of meats that he could think of, and also many kinds of things to drink. And the wine he drank was the strongest wine he ever drank; and therewith he was a little heated, more than he ought to be. As he looked upon the woman she smiled upon him and he thought her the fairest creature he had ever seen. And so he proffered her his love, and prayed her that she would be his. But she refused him in a manner to make him plead more earnestly; and thus he

ceased not to pray her for her love. And when she saw him thus ensnared, she said, "Sir Percivale, know you well I shall not give my love, unless you swear from henceforth you will be my true servant and do nothing but what I shall command you. Will you insure me this, as you are a true knight?"

To this he answered, "Yea, fair lady, by the faith of my body." As he said this he chanced to cast his eyes upon the ground, and there he saw his sword in whose pommel was a red cross, and the sign of the crucifix thereon. Then he made the sign of the cross upon his forehead; when suddenly the pavilion shriveled up, and vanished in smoke and cloud. At this the damsel's smile changed into a look of hate, and she cried aloud and hastened into the ship, and so she sailed away with the wind roaring and yelling that it seemed as if all the water burned after her.

Then Sir Percivale made great sorrow, and took up his sword, and said, "Since my flesh will be my master I will punish it." So he smote himself in the thigh with his sword, and said, "O good Lord, take this in recompense for what I have done against thee, and forgive me my deep transgression, I humbly pray thee."

As he lay moaning and bleeding, the sea grew smooth and he saw coming from the east a ship with the good man on board, on beholding whom he fell into a swoon. When he awoke he found

that his wound had been dressed and the bleeding stopped, and that the good man was seated at his side. Then the good man said that this seeming woman who had deceived him was the master-fiend of hell, and that but for the grace of God he would have fallen before this champion of evil. With these words the good man vanished away and Sir Percivale took his arms, and entered into the ship, and so departed thence.

CHAPTER V

THE QUEST OF SIR BORS

WHEN Sir Bors left Camelot in search of the Holy Grail, as he rode he met a religious man riding upon an ass and Sir Bors saluted him. "What are ye?" said the good man. "Sir," he replied, "I am a knight that would fain be counselled in quest of the Sangreal; for he shall have great worship that shall find it." "Truly," said the good man, "for he shall be the best knight of the world, and the fairest of all the fellowship."

So they rode together until they came to a hermitage, and there he prayed Sir Bors to dwell that night with him. So Sir Bors alighted and put away his armor and prayed him that he might be confessed. And they went both into the chapel and there Sir Bors was confessed; and then they ate bread and drank water together. "Now," said the good man, "I pray thee that thou eat none other till thou sit at the table where the Sangreal shall be." "Sir," said Sir Bors, "but how know you

that I shall sit there?" "Yea," said the good man, "that I know well; but there shall be few of your fellows with you." "All are welcome," said Sir Bors, "that God sendeth me." And when the good man had heard his confession he found him so pure in his life that he marveled.

On the morrow, as soon as the day appeared, Sir Bors departed thence and rode into a forest unto the hour of midday; and there befell him a marvelous adventure. For he met at the parting of two ways, two knights that led Sir Lionel, his brother all naked, bound upon a strong hackney, and his hands bound before his breast; and each of them held in his hands thorns wherewith they went beating him, so that he was all bloody before and behind; and he said never a word, but, as he was great of heart, he suffered all that they did to him, as though he had felt no anguish.

Seeing this, Sir Bors made ready to rescue his brother; but as he looked on the other side of him he saw a knight dragging along a fair gentlewoman who cried out, "Saint Mary, succor your maid!" And when she saw Sir Bors she called to him and said, "By the faith that ye owe to knighthood, help me!"

When Sir Bors heard her say this, he had such sorrow that he knew not what to do. "For if I let my brother be," he thought, "he must be slain, and that I would not for all the earth; and if I help not

the maid I am shamed forever." Then he lifted up his eyes and said weeping, "Fair lord, whose liegeman I am, keep Sir Lionel, my brother, that none of these knights slay him, and for pity of you, and our Lady's sake, I shall succor the maid." Then he cried out to the knight, "Sir knight, lay your hand off that maid, or else ye be but dead." Then the knight set down the maid, and took his shield and drew his sword. And Sir Bors smote him so hard, that it went through his shield and habergeon, on the left shoulder, and he fell down to the earth.

Then Sir Bors went to the maid, and said, "Ye are delivered of this knight this time." To which she replied, "Now lead me, I pray thee, to the place from which this knight took me." "I shall gladly do it," said Sir Bors. So he took the horse of the wounded knight, and set the gentlewoman upon it, and brought her where she desired to be. And there he found twelve knights seeking after her; and when she told them how Sir Bors had delivered her, they made great joy, and besought him to come to her father, a great lord, and he should be right welcome. But Sir Bors answered, "Truly that may not be; for I have a great adventure to do." So he commended them to God and departed.

Then Sir Bors rode after Sir Lionel, his brother, by the trace of their horses; and thus he rode for a

great while. At length he overtook a man clothed in a religious garb, who said, "Sir knight, what seek ye?" "Sir," said Sir Bors, "I seek my brother that I saw within a little while beaten by two knights." "Ah, Sir Bors, trouble not thyself to seek for him, for truly he is dead."

Then he showed him a newly slain body, lying in a bush; and it seemed to him that it was the body of Sir Lionel. At this he made such sorrow that he fell to the ground in a swoon, and lay there a long time. And when he came to himself again, he said, "Fair brother, since the fellowship of you and me is sundered, I shall never have joy again; and now may He that I have taken for my master be my help!" And when he had said this he took up the body in his arms and put it upon his horse. And then he said to the man, "Canst thou tell me the way to some chapel where I may bury this body?" "Come on," said the man, "here is one near by." So they rode till they saw a fair tower, and beside it a chapel. And there they alighted and put the body into a tomb of marble.

Then Sir Bors commended the good man unto God, and departed. And on the morrow he rode unto a castle in a valley, and there he met with a yeoman. "Tell me," said Sir Bors, "knowest thou of any adventure?" "Sir," said he, "there is to be under this castle a great and marvelous tournament." Then Sir Bors thought to be there, if he

might meet with any of the fellowship that were in quest of the Sangreal; so he turned to a hermitage that was on the border of the forest. And when he was come hither, to his surprise he found there Sir Lionel, his brother, who sat all armed at the entry of the chapel door. And when Sir Bors saw him, he had great joy; and alighting from his horse he said, "Fair brother, when came ye hither?"

As soon as Sir Lionel saw him he said, "Ah, Sir Bors, make ye no false show, for, as for you, I might have been slain, for ye left me in peril of death, to go to a gentlewoman; and for that misdeed I now insure you but death, for ye had right well deserved it." When Sir Bors perceived his brother's wrath, he kneeled down to the earth and cried him mercy, holding up both his hands, and prayed him to forgive him. "Nay," said Sir Lionel, "thou shalt have but death for it, for I have the upper hand; therefore leap upon thy horse and keep thyself, and if thou do not, I will run upon thee there as thou standest on foot, and so the shame shall be mine and the harm thine, but of that I care not."

When Sir Bors saw that he must fight with his brother or else die, he knew not what to do. Then his heart counseled him not to fight with his brother, for as Sir Lionel was his elder brother he ought to do him reverence. So he kneeled down before Sir Lionel's horse's feet, and said, "Fair brother, have

mercy upon me, and slay me not, but have in remembrance the great love that should be between us." But Sir Lionel cared not, for the fiend had brought him in such a will that he should slay him. When he saw that Sir Bors would not rise to give him battle, he rushed over him, so that he smote him with his horse's feet to the earth, and hurt him sore so that he swooned with distress. When Sir Lionel saw this, he alighted from his horse for to have smitten off his head; and so he took him by the helm, and would have rent it from his head.

But it happened that Sir Colgrevance, a knight of the Round Table, came at that time thither, as it was our Lord's will; and then he beheld how Sir Lionel would have slain his brother Sir Bors whom he loved so well. Then he leaped down from his horse, and took Sir Lionel by the shoulders, and drew him back from Sir Bors, and said, "Sir Lionel, will ye slay your brother?" "Why," said Sir Lionel, "will ye stay me? If you interfere with me I will slay you first, and him after."

Then he ran upon Sir Bors and would have smitten him; but Sir Colgrevance ran between them, and said, "If ye persist to do so any more, we two shall meddle together." At this Sir Lionel defied him and ran upon him, and gave him a great stroke through the helm; and Sir Colgrevance drew his sword, for he was a passing good knight, and he defended himself right manfully. So long endured

the battle that Sir Bors came to himself, and beheld Sir Colgrevance, the good knight, fighting with his brother for his quarrel. Then was he very sad at heart, and thought that if Sir Colgrevance slew his brother, he should never have joy again, and if his brother slew Sir Colgrevance, the shame should ever be his.

Then would he have risen for to have parted them, but he had not strength enough to stand upon his feet; so he stayed so long that Sir Colgrevance had the worse, for Sir Lionel was a knight of great prowess. Then cried Sir Colgrevance, "Ah, Sir Bors, why come ye not to bring me out of peril of death, wherein I have put myself to succor you?"

With that, Sir Lionel smote off his helm, and bore him to the earth. And when he had slain Sir Colgrevance, he ran upon his brother, moved by the spirit of a fiend, and gave him such a stroke as made him stoop. "For God's sake, leave off this battle," cried Sir Bors, "for if it befell, fair brother, that I slew ye or ye me, we should both be dead of that sin." "Pray ye not me for mercy," said Sir Lionel. Then Sir Bors all weeping drew his sword and said, "Now God have mercy upon me, though I defend my life against my brother."

With that Sir Bors lifted up his sword, and would have stricken his brother. Then he heard a voice that said, "Flee, Sir Bors, and touch him not, else

thou shalt slay him." At this a cloud fell between them from which gleamed a marvelous flame that burned their shields. And they both fell to the earth and lay there a great while in a swoon. And when they came to themselves, Sir Bors saw that his brother had no harm; and he was right glad, for he dreaded sore that God had taken vengeance upon him. Then Sir Lionel said to his brother, "Brother, forgive me, for God's sake, all that I have trespassed against thee." And Sir Bors answered, "God forgive it thee, as I do."

With that Sir Bors heard a voice say, "Sir Bors, take thy way anon quickly to the sea, for Sir Percivale abideth thee there." So Sir Bors departed, and rode the nearest way to the sea. And at last he came to an abbey that was nigh the sea. That night he rested there, and in his sleep there came a voice unto him and bade him go to the seashore. At this he started up and made a sign of the cross upon his forehead, and armed himself, and made ready his horse, and mounted him, and at a broken wall of the abbey he rode out and came to the seashore. There he found a ship covered all with white samite. As he entered into the ship it set out to sea so fast that it seemed to fly; but it was soon so dark that he could see no man, and he laid him down and slept till it was day. When he awaked he saw in the middle of the ship a knight all armed, save his helm. And he knew that it was Sir Perci-

vale de Galis, and each made of the other great joy. Then they told each other of all their adventures; and each comforted the other; and they knelt together and were often at their prayers. And Sir Percivale said, "Now lack we nothing but the good knight Sir Galahad."

CHAPTER VI

THE QUEST OF SIR LAUNCELOT

NOW when Sir Launcelot came to the water of Mortoise he was in great peril, and he laid himself down and fell asleep. And as he slept there came a vision to him which said, "Arise, Sir Launcelot, and take thy armor and enter the first ship that thou shalt find." As he heard these words he started up and took his arms and looking toward the sea he beheld a ship that was without sail or oars. And so he went within the ship, and as soon as he was within he felt the most sweetness that he had ever felt.

Then he prayed, saying, "Fair sweet Father, Jesu Christ, I know not in what joy I am, for this joy passeth all earthly joys that ever I was in." And so in this joy he laid him down upon the ship's board and slept till day. And there he lived a month or more; and if ye would ask how he lived, one would say that He that fed the people of Israel with manna in the desert, so he was fed. For every day when he said his prayers, he was curtained with the grace of the Holy Ghost.

One night he went to sit by the water side, for he was somewhat weary of the ship; and then he listened and heard a horse come with some one riding thereon. And as he came nigh he seemed to be a knight; and he left his horse and took the saddle and the bridle and followed Sir Launcelot into the ship. And then Sir Launcelot addressed him and said, "Ye are welcome." And he answering asked Sir Launcelot his name; and when he knew it he said, "I am Sir Galahad, and thou art my father." And then he kneeled down and asked him for his blessing, and after that took off his helm and kissed him. And there was great joy between them; so much so that no tongue can tell all the pleasant words that they spake to each other. And they told each other all the marvels and adventures that had befallen them.

When Sir Launcelot heard how the marvelous sword was gotten, and who made it, he asked his son to show him the sword, and so he did. And as he looked upon it he kissed the pommel and the hilts and the scabbard. And Sir Launcelot said, "Never before knew I of so high adventures done and so marvelous and strange." So Sir Launcelot and Sir Galahad dwelt in that ship half a year, and served God daily and nightly with all their power.

Now in time as they sailed they arrived at a forest; and as they looked they saw a knight, armed all in white, and richly horsed, and leading in his

right hand a white horse. And he came to the ship and saluted the two knights, and said to Sir Galahad, "Sir, ye have been long enough with your father; come out of the ship and start upon this horse, and go where the adventures shall lead you in quest of the Sangreal." Then Sir Galahad went to his father, and kissed him tenderly and said, "Sweet father, I know not when I shall see you more, till I see the body of Jesu Christ." "I pray you," said Sir Launcelot, "that ye pray to the high Father that he hold me in his service." Then Sir Galahad took the horse; and they heard a voice saying, "Think to do well, for the one shall never see the other again before the dreadful day of doom." And therewith Sir Galahad entered into the forest and rode away.

And now the wind arose and drove Sir Launcelot more than a month over the sea; wherein he slept but little, but prayed to God that he might see some tidings of the Sangreal. So it befell upon a night he arrived before a castle which was very rich and fair. And there was a postern that opened toward the sea, and was without any keeping, save that two lions kept the entry; and the moon shone clear. Anon Sir Launcelot heard a voice that said, "Launcelot, go out of this ship and enter into the castle, where thou shalt see a great part of thy desire." Then he ran to his arms and armed himself, and went to the gate and saw the two lions, at which

he set his hands to his sword and drew it. Then there came a dwarf suddenly and smote him on the arm so sore that the sword fell out of his hands; and he heard a voice say, "O man of evil faith, wherefore believest thou more in thy armor than in thy maker?"

At this Sir Launcelot said, "Fair Lord, I thank thee for thy great mercy, that thou reprovest me of my misdeed; now see I well that thou holdest me for thy servant." Then he took his sword and put it into its sheath, and made a cross upon his forehead, and came to the lions; and they made semblance to do him harm, but he passed them by unhurt, and entered into the castle, and he found no gate or door but it was open. At last he came to a chamber whereof the door was shut; and he set his hand thereto to open it, but he could not. Then he listened, and heard a voice which sung so sweetly that it seemed none earthly thing; and the voice said, "Joy and honor be to the Father of Heaven."

Then Sir Launcelot kneeled down before the chamber, for well he knew that there was the Sangreal in that chamber. And as he kneeled he said, "Fair, sweet Father, Jesu Christ, if ever I did anything that pleased thee, for thy pity show me something of what I seek." And with that he saw the chamber door open, and there came out a great clearness that the house was as bright as though all the torches in the world had been there. So he

came to the chamber door and would have entered; but a voice said unto him, "Stay, Sir Launcelot, and enter not." And he withdrew himself back, and was right heavy in his mind.

Then he looked in the midst of the chamber, and saw a table of silver, and the holy vessel, covered with red samite, and many angels about it; whereof one held a candle which was burning, and another held a cross, and the ornaments of the altar. Then for very wonder and thankfulness he entered into the chamber and came toward the altar of silver. And suddenly a breath that seemed mingled with fire smote him so sore in the face, that therewith he fell to the ground and had no power to rise. And now he felt many hands about him, which took him up and bare him out of the chamber, without any amending of his swoon, and left him there, seeming dead to all the people. So on the morrow, when it was fair daylight, and they within were risen, they found Sir Launcelot, lying before the chamber door. And they looked upon him and felt his pulse, to know if there were any life in him. And they found life in him, but he could neither stand nor stir any member that he had. So they took him and bare him into a chamber, and laid him upon a bed, far from all folk; and there he lay four days. Then one said he was alive, and others said nay. But an aged man said, "He is as full of life as the mightiest of you all, and therefore I coun-

sel you that he be well kept till God bring him back again."

And after twenty-four days he opened his eyes; and when he saw the folk around him he made great sorrow, and said, "Why have ye wakened me? for I was better at ease than I am now!" "What have ye seen?" said they about him. "I have seen," said he, "great marvels that no tongue can tell, and more than any heart can think." Then they said, "Sir, the quest of the Sangreal is achieved now in you, and never shall ye see more of it than ye have seen." "I thank God," said Sir Launcelot, "of his great mercy, for that I have seen, for it sufficeth me."

Then he rose up and clothed himself; and when he was so arrayed they all marveled, for they knew it was Sir Launcelot the good knight. And after four days, he took his leave of the lord of the castle, and of all the fellowship that was there, and thanked them for their great labor and care of him. Then he departed and turned to Camelot, where he found King Arthur and Queen Guinevere; but many of the knights of the Round Table were slain and destroyed; and he told the king all his adventure and all that had befallen him since he departed. And all the court was passing glad to see Sir Launcelot; and the king asked him many tidings of his son Sir Galahad. Sir Launcelot told him of the many adventures of his son, and also of the

adventures of Sir Percivale and Sir Bors which he learned from a damsel that he had met upon the ship. "Now, Heaven would," said the king, "that they were all three here." "That shall never be," said Sir Launcelot, "for two of them shall ye never see, and but one of them shall come again." Thus endeth the story of the search of Sir Launcelot for the Holy Grail.

CHAPTER VII

THE QUEST OF SIR GALAHAD

NOW Sir Galahad after riding many days came to an abbey in which lay King Mordrains who had been blind for a long time. And when the king knew that it was Sir Galahad he besought him to embrace him and let him rest upon his bosom, for he said, "Thou art pure above all knights as is the flower of the lily, and of good virtue like the color of the rose. And so full of the Holy Spirit art thou that my flesh which was dead of age hath become young again." And then he prayed that he might depart from this life, and anon his prayer was heard, and his soul departed from his body; and Sir Galahad put him in the earth as a king ought to be.

Then on he rode until he came to a great forest, and there he met Sir Percivale and Sir Bors, and each was right glad to see the other. And now they three rode together till they came to the castle of King Pelles; and King Pelles's son, Eliazar, brought them before the broken sword wherewith

Joseph was stricken through the thigh. Then Sir Bors set his hand thereto, if he might solder it again, but he could not do it; so he took it to Sir Percivale, but he had no more power thereto than Sir Bors. Then Sir Percivale said to Sir Galahad, "If any man can mend this sword again ye must do it." And so Sir Galahad took the pieces and set them together, and they seemed as if they had never been broken.

Then the three knights parted, and Sir Galahad took his way to the sea, and it befell him that he was benighted in a hermitage. And the good man was glad that he was a knight errant and made him right welcome. And when they were at rest there came a gentlewoman knocking at the door; and the good man came to the door to know what she wanted. Then she said, "I would speak with the knight which is with you." So Sir Galahad went to her and asked her what she would. "Sir Galahad," she said, "I will that you arm yourself, and mount your horse, and follow me; for I will show you the highest adventure that ever knight saw." Then Sir Galahad armed himself and commended himself to God, and bade the damsel go before him, and he would follow where she led.

So she rode as fast as her palfrey might bear her, till she came to the sea; and there they found the ship wherein were Sir Bors and Sir Percivale. As they saw Sir Galahad they cried from the ship say-

ing, "Sir Galahad, you are welcome; and we have been waiting for thee." And when he heard them he asked the damsel who they were, to which she said, "Sir, leave your horse here, and I will leave mine, and we will join ourselves to their company." So they entered into the ship, and the two knights received them both with great joy. For they knew the damsel, as she was Sir Percivale's sister.

Then the wind arose and drove them through the sea all that day and the next, till the ship arrived between two rocks, passing great and marvelous; but there they might not land, for there was a whirlpool; but there was another ship, and upon it they might go without danger. "Go we thither," said the gentlewoman, "and there shall we see adventures, for such is the Lord's will." Then Sir Galahad blessed himself and entered therein, and then next the gentlewoman and then Sir Bors and Sir Percivale. And when they came on board, they found there the table of silver, and the Sangreal which was covered with red samite. And they made great reverence thereto, and Sir Galahad prayed a long time to our Lord, that at what time he should ask to pass out of this world, he should do so. And a voice said to him, "Galahad, thou shalt have thy request; and when thou askest the death of thy body thou shalt have it, and then thou shalt find the life of thy soul."

And anon the wind drove them across the sea, till

they came to the city of Sarras. Then they took out of the ship the table of silver; and Sir Percivale and Sir Bors took it before, and Sir Galahad came behind, and right so they went to the city. And at the gate of the city they saw an old man, a cripple. And Sir Galahad called him, and bade him to help bear this heavy thing. "Truly," said the old man, "it is ten years since I could not go but with crutches." "Care thou not," said Sir Galahad, "but arise up and show thy good will." Then the old man rose up to aid in carrying the Sangreal, and found himself as whole as he ever was; and he ran to the table and took one part with Sir Galahad.

When they came to the city it chanced that the king was dead, and all the city was dismayed, and knew not who might be their king. And as they were in counsel, there came a voice among them, and bade them choose the youngest knight of the three to be their king. So they made Sir Galahad king, by all the assent of the city. And when he was made king, he commanded to make a chest of gold and of precious stones to hold the vessel. And every day the three companions would come before it and make their prayers.

Now at the year's end, and the same day of the year that Sir Galahad received the crown, he got up early, and with his fellows came to where the holy vessel was; and they saw one kneeling before

it that had about him a great fellowship of angels. And he called to Sir Galahad and said, "Come, thou servant of the Lord, and thou shalt see what thou hast much desired to see." Then Sir Galahad's mortal flesh trembled right hard when he began to behold the spiritual things. And the good man said, "Now knowest thou who I am?" "Nay," said Sir Galahad. "I am Joseph of Arimathea, whom your Lord hath sent here to thee, to bear thee fellowship." Then Sir Galahad held up his hands toward heaven and said, "Now, blessed Lord, would I not live longer, if it might please thee." And when he said these words, Sir Galahad went to Sir Percivale and Sir Bors, and kissed them, and commended them to God. And then he kneeled down before the table, and made his prayers, and suddenly his soul departed, and a great multitude of angels bare his soul up to heaven, so that his two companions could well behold it. Also they saw come down from heaven a hand, but they saw not the body; and the hand came right to the vessel and bare it up to heaven. And since then there never has been one so hardy as to say that he had seen the Sangreal on earth any more.

When Sir Percivale and Sir Bors saw Sir Galahad dead they made as much sorrow as ever did two men. And if they had not been good men they might have fallen into despair. As soon as Sir Galahad was buried Sir Percivale retired to a

hermitage out of the city, and took religious clothing and Sir Bors was always with him, but did not change his secular clothing, because he purposed to return to the realm of Logris. Thus a year and two months Sir Percivale lived in the hermitage a full holy life, and then passed out of the world, and Sir Bors buried him by his sister and Sir Galahad.

Then Sir Bors armed himself and departed from Sarra, and entered into a ship, and sailed to the kingdom of Logris and in due time arrived safe at Camelot where the king was. Then there was great joy made of him in the whole court, for they feared he had been dead. And the king made great clerks to come before him, that they should chronicle all the high adventures of the good knights. And Sir Bors told him all the adventures of the Sangreal that had befallen him and his two companions, Sir Percivale and Sir Galahad, and Sir Launcelot told all the adventures of the Sangreal that he had seen. All this was made in great books and put up in the church at Salisbury.

Thus endeth the story of the Holy Grail, which is a story chronicled as one of the truest and holiest that is in this world.

THE END OF THE ROUND TABLE

CHAPTER I

THE PLOT AGAINST SIR LAUNCELOT AND THE QUEEN

AND now in the month of May there befell a great mishap that stayed not until the flower of chivalry of all the world was destroyed. The knights who were the cause of this fatal mischance were Sir Agravaine and Sir Modred who were brothers of Sir Gawaine. They had ever had a privy hate against the queen, dame Guinevere, and Sir Launcelot, and daily and nightly they watched them to make some accusation against them.

Now it happened on a day that Sir Gawaine and all his brethren were in King Arthur's chamber; and then Sir Agravaine said openly so that many knights might hear, that it was a shame that "Sir Launcelot goeth with the queen, and that we should be shamed to suffer so noble a king as King Arthur is to be so deceived." Then spoke Sir Gawaine and said, "Brother, Sir Agravaine, I pray you and

charge you to move no such matters before me, for well you know I will not be of your counsel." "Neither will we," said Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth. "Then will I," said Sir Modred. "I doubt not," said Sir Gawaine, "for to all mischief you were ever prone; yet I would that ye left all this, for I know what will come of it." "Fall of it what may," said Sir Agravaine, "I will disclose it to the king."

Then Sir Gawaine said, "Brother Sir Agravaine, do you not remember how ofttimes Sir Launcelot hath rescued the king and the queen, and how he rescued both you and Sir Modred from Sir Turquine? As for me I shall never be against Sir Launcelot for he not only made me knight, but rescued me from King Carados of the Dolorous Tower and slew him and saved my life. Besides if war should come between Sir Launcelot and King Arthur, know you well that many great kings and lords will hold with Sir Launcelot, and this realm will be harmed and the noble fellowship of the Round Table will be dispersed."

As they thus talked King Arthur came and asked them what it was they made so much noise about. "Now brothers, hold your peace," said Sir Gawaine. "We will not," said Sir Agravaine. Then said Sir Gawaine, "I will not hear your tales nor be of your counsel." "No more will I," said Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris; and therewith they departed, feeling great sorrow.

Then Sir Agravaine told the king all that was said in the court of the conduct of Sir Launcelot and the queen. But the king was loth to believe there was any harm, for he held Sir Launcelot to be one of the noblest knights of them all. So Sir Agravaine laid a plot to entrap Sir Launcelot and the queen, with the intent to find some fault against them. Sir Agravaine and Sir Modred led a party to spy upon the actions of Sir Launcelot and the queen, which when Sir Launcelot saw he fell upon them and slew Sir Agravaine and wounded Sir Modred. Then Sir Launcelot hastened to his friends, and told them of the plot against him, and he withdrew with them to the forest; but he left spies behind to bring him tidings of whatever might be done.

So Sir Launcelot left the court, and then Sir Modred tried to poison the mind of the king against the queen; and at last he made the king believe the queen was at fault. And the law was such in those days that for such a fault, of what estate or condition soever they were, they must be burned to death; and so it was ordained that Queen Guinevere was to be burnt. Then said King Arthur to Sir Gawaine, "I pray you make you ready, in your best armor, with your brethren, Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, to bring the queen to the fire, there to receive her death."

And Sir Gawaine said, "Nay, my most noble lord,

that will I never do; for know you well that my heart will not serve me to see her die, and it shall never be said that I was of your counsel in her death." Then the king commanded Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth to be there, and they said, "We will be there as ye command us; but it will be sore against our will; and it shall be in peaceable wise, bearing no armor upon us." "Alas," said Sir Gawaine, "that I should endure to see this doleful day." And he turned and wept bitterly and went to his chamber.

Then the queen was led forth to death, and her ghostly father was brought to shrive her, and there was weeping and wailing of many lords and ladies. And one whom Sir Launcelot had left to espy the time went and told Sir Launcelot that the queen was led forth to her death. Then Sir Launcelot and the knights that were with him came riding quickly to the place and fell upon the troop that guarded the queen, and slew many of them and put the rest to flight. And in the confusion Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris were slain, for they were unarmed and defenceless. Then Sir Launcelot rode straight to the queen and placed her on his horse and brought her to his castle La Joyeuse Garde.

Then there came one to Sir Gawaine and told him how Sir Launcelot had slain the knights and carried away the queen. And Sir Gawaine was glad that the queen was saved and said, "I knew full well

QVEEN.GVINEVERE.
PASSETH.TO.HER.
DEATH.

that Sir Launcelot would rescue her or would die in the field; and indeed I would have done it myself had I stood in his case." But when they told him that Sir Launcelot had slain his brothers, Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris, he was stricken to his heart and said, "Alas, now is my joy gone forever." And then he fell down and swooned, and long he lay there as he had been dead.

And when he arose out of his swoon, Sir Gawaine ran to the king, crying, "O King Arthur, mine uncle, my brothers are slain, Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris, who were two noble knights." Then the king wept and so did Sir Gawaine. And when they told him that Sir Launcelot had slain them, he said, "My king, my lord, and mine uncle; bear witness now that I make you a promise that I shall hold by my knighthood, that from this day I will never fail Sir Launcelot until one of us has slain the other. I will seek Sir Launcelot throughout seven kings' realms, but I shall slay him or he shall slay me." "Ye shall not need to seek him," said the king, "for as I hear Sir Launcelot will abide me and you in the Joyeuse Garde; and much people draweth unto him, as I hear say." "That may I believe," said Sir Gawaine; "but, my lord, summon your friends and I will summon mine." "It shall be done," said the king.

So the king sent letters and writs throughout all England to summon all the knights, who came in

great numbers,—knights, dukes, and earls,—so that he had a great host. And when they were assembled King Arthur informed them all how Sir Launcelot had bereft him of his queen. Then they all made ready to lay siege to Sir Launcelot where he lay within Joyeuse Garde. Now when Sir Launcelot heard of it he called his warriors together, and many good knights held with him, both for his sake and the sake of the queen. But King Arthur's host was so large that Sir Launcelot would not abide it in the field; and indeed he was full loth to do battle against the king. So Sir Launcelot drew himself and his forces into his strong castle in which he gathered all manner of provisions. Then came King Arthur with Sir Gawaine and a mighty host, and laid siege all about La Joyeuse Garde, both the town and the castle; but in no wise would Sir Launcelot ride out of his castle, neither suffer any of his knights to issue out, until many weeks were past.

Then it befell upon a day in harvest time, Sir Launcelot looked over the wall and spake aloud to King Arthur and Sir Gawaine, "My lords both, it is in vain that ye make this siege, for here ye shall win no worship, but only dishonor; for if I list to come out with my good knights, I shall soon make an end of this war." "Come forth, if thou darest," said King Arthur, "and I promise thee that I shall meet thee in the midst of the field."

"God forbid," said Sir Launcelot, "that I should encounter with the most noble king that made me a knight." "Fie upon thy fair language," said the king, "for know you well that I am thy mortal foe, and ever will be to my dying day, since you, like a traitor, have robbed me of my queen." "As for that," said Sir Launcelot, "there is no knight under heaven that dare make it good that ever I was traitor to your person; and as for my lady the queen, I will make answer and will prove it on any knight except you and Sir Gawaine, that she is a true lady unto you as any is living unto her lord. And if she chooses to hold me in high regard it is because you have ofttimes consented that she should be burned and then it was my good fortune to do battle for her; and you yourself have loved me and thanked me that I saved your queen from the fire. Therefore, my good and gracious lord, take your queen with your good grace, for she is both fair, true, and good."

And now it is said that King Arthur would have taken his queen again and been accorded with Sir Launcelot, but Sir Gawaine would not suffer him to do so. With bitter hate towards Sir Launcelot he said, "False, recreant knight, I let thee know that my lord and uncle, King Arthur, shall have his queen and thee, and slay you both if it please him. And besides that, what right had ye to slay my brother Sir Gaheris, who bore no arms against

thee, and Sir Gareth whom thou madest knight, and who loved thee more than all my kin?"

"As for that," said Sir Launcelot, "by the faith I owe to knighthood I would as soon have slain my nephew, Sir Bors, at that time; but alas it was that I did not see them and did not intend to slay them." "Thou liest, recreant knight," said Sir Gawaine, "for thou slewest them in despite of me; and therefore know you well I shall make war upon thee all the while that I may live."

When Sir Bors and Sir Ector de Maris and Sir Lionel heard this outcry, they called to them Sir Palamides and Sir Safere his brother, and Sir Lavaine, with many more, and all went to Sir Launcelot. And they said, "My lord, Sir Launcelot, we pray you, if you will have our service, keep us no longer in these walls, for know well that all your fair speech and forbearance will not avail you. Let us ride into the field and do battle with them." "Alas," said Sir Launcelot, "to ride forth and do battle I am full loth."

Then Sir Launcelot called unto King Arthur and Sir Gawaine, and said, "My lords, since I am compelled to ride forth into the field, I pray you that neither King Arthur nor Sir Gawaine shall come into the field." But Sir Gawaine replied, "This is the king's quarrel to fight about the queen, and it is my quarrel because of the death of Sir Gareth."

Then Sir Launcelot made ready to come out of

the castle in good array and the king's forces made ready to meet them. Now Sir Launcelot charged all his knights to save King Arthur and Sir Gawaine. As the hosts approached each other, Sir Gawaine came forth and offered combat and Sir Lionel encountered him and Sir Gawaine smote Sir Lionel through the body that he fell to the earth as if dead. Then began a great conflict, and many knights were slain; but ever Sir Launcelot did what he could to save the people of King Arthur's party; and ever King Arthur followed Sir Launcelot to slay him but Sir Launcelot suffered him and would not strike again.

Then Sir Bors encountered King Arthur, and smote him down, and then alighted from his horse and drew his sword, and said to Sir Launcelot, "Shall I make an end of this war?" for he meant to have slain King Arthur. "Not so," said Sir Launcelot, "touch him no more, for I will never see that most noble king that made me knight either slain or shamed." And therewith Sir Launcelot alighted from his horse, and took up the king and placed him on his horse, and said, "My lord, King Arthur, for Heaven's sake, cease this strife." And King Arthur looked upon Sir Launcelot, and the tears burst from his eyes, thinking on the great courtesy that was in Sir Launcelot more than in any other man; and therewith the king rode away, saying, "Alas, that ever this war began."

Then anon both parties withdrew to seek repose and bring in their dead and tend the wounded. And on the morrow they began again and Sir Gawaine and Sir Bors were both severely wounded, and many knights were slain. Sir Launcelot would not exert himself against the king but when his nephew Sir Bors was wounded he fell upon the knights, slaying many and driving them from the field. And now as the war went on, it was noised abroad through all Christendom, and at last it was told before the Pope; and he, considering the great goodness of King Arthur and Sir Launcelot, called unto him a noble clerk, which was the Bishop of Rochester, who was then in his dominions, and sent him to King Arthur, charging him that he take his queen, Dame Guinevere, to himself again, and make peace with Sir Launcelot.

Then Sir Launcelot brought the queen to King Arthur and said, "My noble king, I have brought to you my lady, the queen, by the Pope's commandment, as right requireth; and here I say that if there be any knight, of whatsoever degree, except yourself, that will dare to say that she is not true to you, I will make good upon his body that she is a true lady unto her lord, and that those who say otherwise are liars and have brought this wrong between you and me. And know you, my lord and most noble king, that many times she hath been put to great wrong, and it hath pleased you that I should fight

for her and rescue her. And I have done many things for you and Sir Gawaine, and now I pray you that I may have my Lord Arthur's good grace."

But Sir Gawaine would not listen to these words but said that Sir Launcelot had been a traitor to the king and must leave the realm. At this Sir Launcelot sighed, and tears fell on his cheeks, and he said, "Alas, most noble Christian realm, which I have loved above all other realms, and in which I have gotten a great part of my worship, that I must depart from thee in this wise." Then he kissed the queen and brought her to the king and said, "Now let see whether any one in this place dare say the queen is not true unto my lord Arthur; let him speak if he dare." And then he took his leave and departed; and there was neither king, duke nor earl, baron nor knight, lady nor gentleman, that did not weep as if they were out of their mind, except Sir Gawaine. And when Sir Launcelot took his horse to ride away again there was sobbing and weeping for sorrow at his departure. And thus Sir Launcelot left the court forever; and many of the noblest knights for the love they bore him went with him.

And so it was that King Arthur received back the queen, and Sir Launcelot departed from the kingdom with all his knights, and went to his own country. So they shipped at Cardiff and

sailed unto Benwick, which some men call Bayonne, though indeed it was France, for Sir Launcelot and his nephew were lords of all France. And all the people of these lands came to Sir Launcelot, and received him home right joyfully. And Sir Launcelot established and adorned all his castles and towns, and greatly advanced all his noble knights,—Sir Lionel and Sir Bors and Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Blamor, and Sir Lavaine, and many others,—and made them lords of lands and castles, till he left himself no more than any one of them.

CHAPTER II

KING ARTHUR AGAIN ATTACKS SIR LAUNCELOT

NOW when a year had passed King Arthur and Sir Gawaine made ready a great host to invade the country of Sir Launcelot. So they shipped at Cardiff and came across the sea and landed upon Sir Launcelot's lands and burnt and wasted, through the vengeance of Sir Gawaine, all that they might overrun. Then word came to Sir Launcelot that King Arthur and Sir Gawaine had landed upon his shores and were wasting his lands. Sir Bors said unto him, "My lord, Sir Launcelot, give us leave to meet them in the field, and we shall make them rue the time they ever came into this country." And so advised him many other noble knights.

To this Sir Launcelot replied, "I am full loth to ride out with my knights for the shedding of Christian blood; so we will keep our wall awhile, and I will send a messenger unto my lord Arthur to propose a treaty for better is peace than war." So Launcelot sent forth a damsel, and a dwarf with her,

to request King Arthur to leave his warring upon Sir Launcelot's lands. And when the damsel came to the pavilion of King Arthur she alighted, and there met her a gentle knight, Sir Lucan the butler, and said, "Fair damsel, come ye from Sir Launcelot du Lake?"

"Yes, sir," she said, "I come hither to speak to the king." "Alas!" said Sir Lucan, "my lord Arthur would be reconciled to Sir Launcelot but Sir Gawaine will not suffer him." With this Sir Lucan led the damsel to the king, where he sat with Sir Gawaine, to hear what she would say.

Now when the damsel had told her tale, the tears ran out of the king's eyes; and all the lords were forward to advise the king to be accorded with Sir Launcelot, except Sir Gawaine, who said, "My lord, mine uncle, what will ye do? Will ye now turn back, now that you are so far advanced upon your journey? If ye do, all the world will speak shame of you." "Nay," said King Arthur, "I will do as ye advise me; but do thou give the damsel her answer, for I may not speak to her for pity."

Then said Sir Gawaine, "Damsel, say ye to Sir Launcelot, that it is waste labor to sue mine uncle for peace; and say that I, Sir Gawaine, send him word that I promise him, by the faith I owe unto Heaven and knighthood, I shall never leave him till he has slain me or I have slain him." So the damsel returned to Sir Launcelot; and when he heard the

answer he was so deeply grieved that the tears ran down his cheeks.

Then his noble knights gathered about him and urged that they go forth to battle with the king. But Sir Launcelot said, "That may be lightly done, but I was never so loth to do battle, and therefore I pray you as ye love me that ye be ruled as I will have you, for I will always flee from that noble king who made me a knight." To this the knights were silent and soon withdrew to rest.

On the morrow early at the dawning of the day the army of King Arthur besieged the town and set up ladders to climb upon the walls. And the men of Sir Launcelot beat them backward and drove them from the walls. Then came Sir Gawaine riding before the gates, well armed, and cried with a loud voice, "Where art thou now, thou false traitor, Sir Launcelot? Why hidest thou thyself within holes and walls like a coward? Look out now, thou traitor knight, and I will avenge upon thy body the death of my three brethren."

All this language Sir Launcelot heard and the knights who were with him; and they said to him, "Sir Launcelot, now must you defend yourself like a knight, or else be shamed forever, for you have slept overlong and suffered overmuch." Then Sir Launcelot spake on high to King Arthur, and said, "My lord Arthur, now I have forborne long, and suffered you and Sir Gawaine to do what you

would; and now must I defend myself, since Sir Gawaine hath accused me of treason." Then Sir Launcelot armed himself and mounted upon his horse, and the noble knights with him, and came out of the city; and the host without stood all apart; and so the covenant was made that no man should come near the two knights, nor deal with them, till one was dead or yielded.

Then Sir Launcelot and Sir Gawaine departed a great way asunder, and then rode together with all their horses' might, and each smote the other in the middle of his shield but neither of them was unhorsed, though their horses fell to the earth. Then they leaped from their horses and drew their swords and gave may sad strokes, so that the blood burst out in many places. Now Sir Gawaine had this gift from a holy man that every day, from morning until noon, his strength was increased threefold, and then it fell again to its natural measure. Sir Launcelot was aware of this, and therefore during the three hours that Sir Gawaine's strength was at its height, Sir Launcelot covered himself with his shield, and kept his strength in reserve. And during this time Sir Gawaine gave him many sad strokes and all the knights that looked marveled how Sir Launcelot could endure them. Then, as it was past noon, Sir Gawaine had only his own might; and now Sir Launcelot stretched himself up and doubled his strokes and gave Sir

Gawaine such a buffet that he fell down on his side; and Sir Launcelot drew back and would strike him no more.

At this Sir Gawaine cried out, "Why withdrawest thou, false traitor? Now turn again and slay me, for if you leave me thus, when I am whole again, I shall do battle with thee again." To this Sir Launcelot replied, "I shall endure you again, by God's grace; but know you well, Sir Gawaine, that I will never smite a fallen knight." And so Sir Launcelot went into the city, and Sir Gawaine was borne into King Arthur's pavilion, and his wounds were looked after, and salved with soft ointments. And King Arthur fell sick with sorrow at the hurt of Sir Gawaine and at the war betwixt himself and Sir Launcelot.

Thus the siege endured and Sir Gawaine lay helpless a month and then met Sir Launcelot again in the same way as before, and with the same result. And now as he was recovering from his overthrow, there came tidings unto King Arthur that made him return with all his hosts to England.

CHAPTER III

THE DEATH OF KING ARTHUR

WHEN King Arthur crossed the sea to make war against Sir Launcelot he left Sir Modred, his nephew, ruler of England. Now Sir Modred proved a traitor to his trust and caused letters to be written, as if from beyond the sea, saying that King Arthur was slain in battle. So he called a Parliament, and made himself to be crowned king; and he took the queen Guinevere and said plainly that he would wed her. At this the queen was filled with horror; but she durst not discover her heart, and so spake fair and seemed to agree with Sir Modred's will. And when the time of the wedding was set, she besought him that she might go to London to buy such things as were needed for the wedding. To this Lord Modred gave assent; but as soon as she came to the city she took the tower of London, and filled it with all manner of victuals and garrisoned it with men.

Now when Sir Modred saw that his purpose was foiled by the queen, he was very wroth, and he went

and laid siege to the tower, and made a great assault upon it; but all would not avail him. Then he besought the queen with soft words and fair letters and tender songs to come forth and be his wife; but all availed not, for she said that she would rather slay herself than be married with him.

And the tidings came to Sir Modred that King Arthur had raised the siege of Sir Launcelot and was coming home. Then Sir Modred gathered all the barons of the land and poisoned their minds against King Arthur; and so they resolved that they would abide by Sir Modred, for better or for worse, and aid him to oppose King Arthur. And so Sir Modred drew a great host to Dover, for there he heard say that King Arthur would arrive.

And as Sir Modred was at Dover with his army, King Arthur came with a great number of ships and galleys, and there was Sir Modred awaiting to prevent his own uncle from coming to the land over which he was king. Then there was launching of great boats and small, full of noble men of arms, and there was much slaughter of gentle knights on both sides. But King Arthur and his knights were so brave that they could not be kept from the shores; and so they landed and drove Sir Modred aback so that he fled and all his people.

When the battle was over, King Arthur commanded that they should bury his people that were dead. And then was Sir Gawaine found in a great

boat, lying more than half dead. And King Arthur went to him and made great sorrow for him out of measure. "Mine uncle," said Sir Gawaine, "know thou well that my death day is come, and all is through mine own hastiness and wilfulness, for I am smitten upon the old wound which Sir Launcelot gave me, of the which I feel that I must die. And had Sir Launcelot been with you as of old, this war had never been, and of all this I am the cause."

Then Sir Gawaine prayed the king to send for Sir Launcelot, and to cherish him above all other knights. And he called for paper and ink and wrote a letter to Sir Launcelot saying, "The flower of all noble knights that ever I heard of, or saw in my days, I send thee greeting, and as I am come to my death by being smitten in the wound that thou gavest me, I beseech thee to return again unto this realm and see my tomb, and pray some prayers for my soul. And for the love that ever was betwixt us, make no tarrying but come over the sea with all haste, that thou mayest with thy noble knights rescue the noble king that made thee knight, even my lord King Arthur, for he is beset by a false traitor that is my half brother, Sir Modred."

Then Sir Gawaine wept and King Arthur wept with him, and so sore were their hearts that they both swooned. And when they awaked, Sir Gawaine prayed the king to send for Sir Launcelot

and to cherish him above all other knights. And then, just at the hour of noon, Sir Gawaine yielded up his spirit; and the king had him buried in a chapel within Dover Castle; and there all men may see the skull of him, and the same wound is seen that Sir Launcelot gave him in battle.

Then it was told the king that Sir Modred had pitched his camp upon Barrendown; and the king rode thither, and there was a great battle betwixt them, and King Arthur's party stood best, and Sir Modred and his party fled unto Canterbury.

Soon after a day was fixed by King Arthur and Sir Modred that they should meet upon a down near Salisbury, not far from the sea-side, and there do battle again. And at night, as the king slept, he dreamed a wonderful dream. It seemed to him that there came to him Sir Gawaine and a number of fair ladies with him. And when King Arthur saw him he said, "Welcome, my sister's son, I thought that thou wast dead and now I see thee alive and great is my joy. But O, fair nephew, who are these ladies that are come with thee?"

"Sir," said Gawaine, "all these are ladies for whom I have fought when I was a living man; and because I did battle for them in a righteous quarrel, they have given me grace to bring me hither unto you, to warn you of your death, if ye fight to-morrow with Sir Modred. Therefore, make you a treaty and arrange for a month's delay, for within

a month Sir Launcelot will come with all his noble knights and rescue you full worshipfully and slay Sir Modred and all that hold with him." And then Sir Gawaine and all the ladies vanished.

And anon the king called to fetch his noble lords and wise bishops unto him. And when they were come, the king told them of his vision, and what Sir Gawaine had said to him. Then the king sent Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere, with two bishops, and charged them in any wise to make a treaty for a month and a day with Sir Modred. So they departed and came to Sir Modred and told him the desire of the king; and at last Sir Modred was agreed to have Cornwall and Kent during King Arthur's life, and all of England after his death.

Then it was agreed that King Arthur and Sir Modred should meet betwixt both their hosts and each of them should bring fourteen persons, and then and there should sign the treaty. And when King Arthur was prepared to go forth, he warned all his host, "If so be, ye see any sword drawn, look ye come on fiercely, and slay whomsoever withstandeth, for I in no wise trust that traitor, Sir Modred." In likewise Sir Modred warned his host.

So they met, and were agreed, and accorded in all respects. Then wine was brought and they drank, pledging their faith to keep the compact. Just then there came an adder out of a little heath

bush and stung a knight on the foot. And when the knight felt himself stung he looked down and saw the adder, and then he drew his sword to slay the adder, and thought of no other harm. Now when the host on both sides saw that sword drawn, they blew trumpets and horns, and shouted aloud. And King Arthur took his horse, and rode to his party, saying, "Alas, this unhappy day!" And Sir Modred did likewise; and never was there seen a more doleful battle in Christian land. And ever King Arthur rode throughout the battle and did full nobly, as a worthy knight should; and Sir Modred did his devoir, and put himself in great peril.

And thus they fought all day long, till the most of all the noble knights lay dead upon the ground. Then the king looked about him, and saw of all his good knights none were left but Sir Lucan and his brother, Sir Bedivere; and they were sore wounded. And as he saw them he said, "Alas, that I ever should see this doleful day. For now I am come to mine end. But would to God that I knew where was that traitor Sir Modred that hath caused all this mischief!"

At this King Arthur saw where Sir Modred stood leaning upon his sword among a great heap of dead men. "Now give me my spear," said Arthur unto Sir Lucan, "for yonder I spy the traitor that hath caused all this woe." "Sir, let him be," said Sir Lucan, "for if ye pass this unhappy day, ye shall

be right well revenged upon him. Remember what the spirit of Sir Gawaine told you, and leave off now, for ye have now the field; and if ye leave off now this evil day of destiny is past."

"Betide me life, betide me death," said King Arthur, "he shall not now escape my hands." Then the king took his spear in both hands, and ran towards Sir Modred, crying, "Traitor, now is thy death-day come." And then King Arthur smote Sir Modred under his shield with his spear through the body. And when Sir Modred felt that he had his death wound, taking his sword in both hands he smote King Arthur with all his might on the side of the head, so that the sword pierced the helmet and the brain-pan; and then Sir Modred fell stark dead upon the earth. And the noble King Arthur fell in a swoon to the earth.

Then Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere raised him up, and gently led him betwixt them both to a little chapel not far from the sea-side. And when the king was there he thought himself well eased. Then they heard people crying in the field; and Sir Lucan went to see what the cry meant and he saw by the moonlight that robbers were come to rob the dead. And he returned and said to the king, "By my advice, it is best that we bring you to some town." "I would it were so," said the king. And when the king tried to go he fainted.

Then Sir Lucan took up the king on the one

part, and Sir Bedivere on the other part; and in the lifting Sir Lucan fell in a swoon to the earth, for he was grievously wounded; and therewith the noble knight's heart burst. And when the king awoke he beheld Sir Lucan, how he lay foaming at the mouth, and speechless. "Alas," said the king, "this is to me a full heavy sight, to see this noble duke so die for my sake; for he would have holpen me that had more need of help than I; and he would not complain, his heart was so set to help me."

Then as Sir Bedivere wept for his brother, the king said, "Leave this mourning and weeping, for know thou well, if I might live myself, the death of Sir Lucan would grieve me evermore; but my time hieth fast. Therefore," said Arthur to Sir Bedivere, "take thou Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water-side; and when thou comest there I charge thee throw my sword into the water, and come again and tell me what thou seest."

"My lord," said Sir Bedivere, "your commandment shall be done." So Sir Bedivere departed, and by the way he beheld that noble sword, that the pommel and the haft were all of precious stones; and then he said to himself, "If I throw this rich sword into the water, no good shall come thereof, but only harm and loss." And then Sir Bedivere hid Excalibur under a tree. And when he returned to the king, the king said, "What sawest

thou there?" "Sir," answered the knight, "I saw nothing but the waves and wind." "Alas," said the king, "thou hast deceived me. Go thou lightly again, and as thou love me, spare not to throw it in." Then Sir Bedivere went again and took the sword in his hand to throw it; but again it seemed to him but sin and shame to throw away that noble sword, and he hid it away again, and returned and told the king he had done his commandment.

"What sawest thou there?" said the king. "Sir," he answered, "I saw nothing but water deep and waves wan." "Ah, traitor untrue," said King Arthur, "now hast thou betrayed me twice. And yet thou art named a noble knight and hast been near and dear to me. But now go again, and do as I bid thee, for thy long tarrying putteth me in jeopardy of my life." Then Sir Bedivere went to the sword, and lightly took it up, and went to the water-side; and he bound the girdle about the hilt, and then threw the sword as far into the water as he might. And lo, there came up an arm and a hand out of the water, and met it, and caught it, and shook it thrice, and brandished it; and then the hand vanished away with the sword in the water.

Then Sir Bedivere came again to the king, and told him what he had seen. "Help me hence," said the king, "for I fear I have tarried too long." Then Sir Bedivere took the king upon his back,

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and so went with him to the water-side; and when they came there, even fast by the bank there rode a little barge with many fair ladies in it, and among them was a queen; and all had on black hoods, and they wept and shrieked when they saw King Arthur.

"Now put me in the barge," said the king. And there received him three queens with great mourning, and in one of their laps King Arthur laid his head. And the queen said, "Ah, dear brother, why have ye tarried so long? Alas, this wound in your head hath caught overmuch cold." And then they rowed from the land, and Sir Bedivere beheld them go from him. Then he cried, "Ah, my lord Arthur, ye leave me here alone among my enemies!" "Comfort thyself," said the king, "for in me is not farther help; for I go to the vale of Avalon, to heal me of my grievous wound; and if thou never hear of me again, pray for my soul." And as soon as Sir Bedivere had lost sight of the barge, he wept and wailed aloud; and then took to the forest, and went all that night, and in the morning he was aware of a chapel and a hermitage.

Then went Sir Bedivere thither; and when he came to the chapel, he saw where lay a hermit on the ground near a tomb that was newly graven. "Sir," said Sir Bedivere, "what man is there buried that ye pray so near unto?" "Fair son," said the hermit, "I know not verily. But this night there

came a number of ladies and brought hither one dead and prayed me to bury him. "Alas," said Sir Bedivere, "that was my good lord King Arthur!" Then Sir Bedivere swooned by the side of the tomb; and when he awoke he prayed the hermit that he might abide with him, to live with fasting and prayers. "You are welcome," said the hermit. So there abode Sir Bedivere with the hermit; and he put on poor clothes, and he served the hermit full lowly in fasting and in prayers.

Thus they tell us of King Arthur that he was led away in a ship wherein were three queens; the one was King Arthur's sister, Queen Morgan le Fay; the other was Viviane, the Lady of the Lake; and the third was the Queen of Northgalis. Yet some men say that King Arthur is not dead, but hid away in another place; and men say that he shall come again and reign over England. But many say that there is written over his tomb this verse,

"HIC JACET ARTHURUS, REX QUONDAM,
REX QUE FUTURUS."

"Here Arthur lies, king once, and king to be."

And when Queen Guinevere heard that King Arthur was slain, and all the noble knights with him, she stole away, and five ladies with her; and she went to Almesbury, and made herself a nun,

and wore white clothes and black, and took great penance as ever did a sinful lady, and lived in fasting, prayers, and almsdeeds. And there she became the abbess and ruler of the nuns and lived a sweet and holy life, loved by all who knew her.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEATHS OF QUEEN GUINEVERE AND SIR LAUNCELOT

NOW when Sir Launcelot heard in his country that Sir Modred was crowned king of England and had made war against his uncle, King Arthur, then was Sir Launcelot wroth without measure; and he said to his kinsmen, "Alas, the double traitor, Sir Modred; now it repenteth me that ever he escaped out of my hands." Then Sir Launcelot and his fellows made ready in all haste, with ships and galleys, to pass to England; and so he hurried over till he came to Dover, and there he landed with a great army.

And there Sir Launcelot was told that King Arthur was slain. "Alas," said Sir Launcelot, "this is the heaviest tidings that ever came to me." Then he called together the kings, dukes, barons, and knights, and said to them, "My fair lords, I thank you all for coming into this country with me, but we are come too late, and that shall repent me while I live. But since it is so," said Sir Launcelot, "I

will myself ride and seek my lady, Queen Guinevere, for I have heard that she hath fled into the west. Therefore ye shall abide me here fifteen days, and if I come not within that time, then take your ships and your host and depart from this country."

So Sir Launcelot departed and rode westerly; and there he sought many days for the queen. At last he came to a nunnery, and was seen by Queen Guinevere as he walked in the cloister; and when she saw him she swooned away. And when Sir Launcelot was brought to her she said, "Sir Launcelot, I require thee and beseech thee, for all the love that ever was betwixt us, that thou never see me more, but return to thy kingdom and take thee a wife, and live with her in joy and bliss; and pray for me to my Lord, that I may get my soul's health."

"Nay, madam," said Sir Launcelot, "know you well that what you say I shall never do; but the same destiny that you have taken that will I also take, for to please and serve God. For I take record of Heaven that in thee I have found earthly joy; and if I had found you now so disposed I would have taken you to my own realm to be my queen. But since I find you otherwise disposed, I assure you faithfully I will ever take to penance and prayers while my life lasteth, if that I can find any hermit that will receive me." And so they parted, with tears and much lamentation; and the ladies

bore the queen to her chamber and Sir Launcelot took his horse and rode away, weeping.

And he rode all that day and all that night through the forest and at last he was aware of a hermitage and a chapel. Then he heard a little bell ring to mass and thither he rode and alighted and tied his horse to the gate and heard mass. And he that sang the mass was the hermit with whom Sir Bedivere had taken up his abode; and Sir Bedivere knew Sir Launcelot, and they spake together after mass. But when Sir Bedivere had told his tale, Sir Launcelot's heart almost burst for sorrow. Then he kneeled down and prayed the hermit to shrive him, and besought that he might be his brother. And the hermit said, "I will gladly;" and then he put a habit upon Sir Launcelot, and there he lived and served God day and night, with prayers and fastings.

Now the great host abode at Dover till the end of the fifteen days set by Sir Launcelot, and then Sir Bors made them go home again to their own country; and Sir Bors, Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Blamor, and many others, took on them to ride through all England to seek Sir Launcelot. So Sir Bors by fortune rode until he came to the same chapel where Sir Launcelot was; and when he saw Sir Launcelot in that manner of clothing, he prayed the hermit that he might also become a brother and be dressed in the hermit's garb. And so there

was a habit put upon him, and there he lived in prayers and fasting. And within half a year came others of the knights, their fellows, and took such a habit as Sir Launcelot and Sir Bors had. Thus they endured in great penance six years.

Now upon a night there came a vision to Sir Launcelot, and charged him to hasten toward Almesbury, for "by the time thou come there," it said, "thou shalt find Queen Guinevere dead." Then Sir Launcelot rose up early and told the hermit thereof; and the hermit said, "It were well ye disobey not this vision." Then Sir Launcelot took his seven companions with him, and they went on foot from Glastonbury to Almesbury, which was more than thirty miles. And when they came to Almesbury they found that Queen Guinevere had died but half an hour before. And the ladies of the convent told Sir Launcelot how that the queen had said that he was now a priest and would come and take her body and bury it beside her lord King Arthur. Then Sir Launcelot went where she lay in death, and as he saw her visage he sighed but wept not greatly. And then he said the funeral service all himself, both the dirge at night and sang the mass at morn. And there was prepared a horse bier, and a hundred torches were burning about the body of the queen; and Sir Launcelot and his fellows followed the bier on foot from Almesbury until

they came to Glastonbury; and there she was wrapped in cered clothes, and laid in a coffin of marble. And when she was put in the earth, Sir Launcelot swooned away and lay for a long time as one dead. And when he waked again he said, "When I remember her beauty and her nobleness, and that also of her king; and when I saw her corpse and his corpse so lie together, truly my heart was so full of grief that it would not sustain my body; and when I remember that it was through my fault that these who were peerless among all Christian people were laid low, my heart sank within me and I could not sustain myself."

And after this Sir Launcelot never ate but little meat, nor drank; but continually mourned and prayed night and day, and no one could comfort him. And within six weeks he fell sick; and he sent for the hermit and all his true fellows, and said, "Sir hermit, I pray you give me all my rites that a Christian man ought to have." "It shall not need you," said the hermit and all his friends, "it is but heaviness of your blood, and to-morrow morn ye shall be well." "My fair lords," said Sir Launcelot, "my body will soon be in the earth for I have warning of it more than I now will say. Therefore give me my rites."

So when he had all the rites that a Christian man should have to prepare for death, he prayed that his

fellows might bear his body to Joyeuse Garde. "It repenteth me sore," said Sir Launcelot, "but I made a vow beforetime that in Joyeuse Garde I would be buried, and I pray you that you will bear me thither." Then there was weeping and wringing of hands among his fellows. And that night Sir Launcelot died; and when Sir Bors and his fellows came to his bedside the next morning, they found him stark dead; and he lay with a smile upon his face and the sweetest savor all about him that they ever knew.

And they put Sir Launcelot into the same horse-bier that Queen Guinevere was laid in, and the hermit and they all together went with the body till they came to the Joyeuse Garde. And there they laid his corpse in the body of the choir and sang and read many psalms and prayers over him. And ever his visage was laid open to the people, that all folks might behold him. And as they were at the service, there came Sir Ector de Maris, who had been seeking Sir Launcelot his brother for seven years, through all England, Scotland, and Wales. And when Sir Ector heard such sounds in the chapel of Joyeuse Garde, he alighted and came into the choir. And they all knew Sir Ector, though he knew not them. Then Sir Bors went to him and told him how there lay his brother Sir Launcelot, dead. At this Sir Ector threw his shield, his sword, and helm from him; and when he

beheld Sir Launcelot's visage it were hard for any tongue to tell the doleful complaints he made for his brother.

"Ah, Sir Launcelot," he said, "there thou liest. And now I dare say that thou wast never matched of none earthly knight's hand; and thou wert the courtliest knight that ever bare shield; and thou wert the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrode horse; and thou wert the truest lover, of a sinful man, that ever loved woman; and thou wert the kindest man that ever struck with sword; and thou wert the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights; and thou wert the meekest man and the gentlest, that ever ate in hall among ladies; and thou wert the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in rest."

Then there was weeping and dolor out of measure. Thus they kept Sir Launcelot's corpse fifteen days, and then they buried it with great devotion. And then they all went with the Bishop of Canterbury to his hermitage, and there abode for more than a month. And Sir Bedivere remained there, a hermit, unto the end of his life. And Sir Bors, Sir Ector, Sir Blamor, and Sir Bleoberis went to the Holy Land, for so Sir Launcelot had commanded them if he passed out of the world before them. And these four knights did many battles with the infidel Turks; and there at last they died upon a Good Friday, as it pleased God.

Thus endeth this noble and joyous book of King Arthur and of his noble knights of the Round Table, which book was reduced into English by Sir Thomas Malory, Knight; and as he ends the story he says, "I pray you all gentlemen and gentlewomen that read this book of Arthur and his knights, pray for me that while I am alive that God send me good deliverance, and when I am dead, I pray you all pray for my soul."

THE END